

BEHIND THE DIAMOND PANES

The story of a Fife mining community

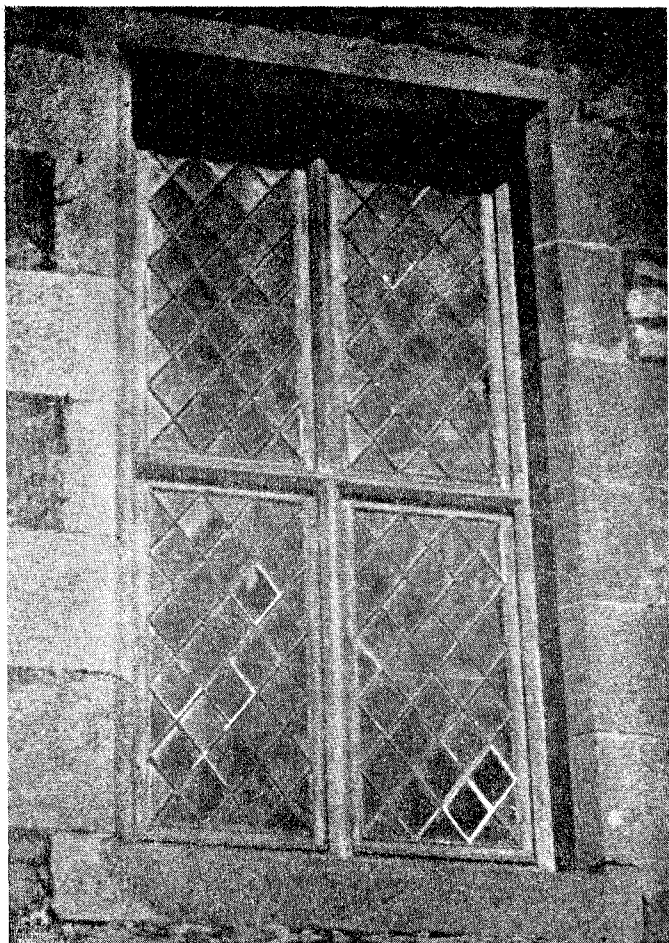
by

BOB HOLMAN

Cowdenbeath, 1952

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The characteristic Diamond Panes of Fordell village

FOREWORD

THE history books of Scotland record the time and place of great events in our National history. But much of the record of the Scottish people is lost for want of a recorder. More's the pity.

In bygone days, communities were established near the scene of industry and prospered while they served their purpose. Then they passed away leaving little more than a pang of regret in the hearts of those who knew their joys and sorrows.

Old mining villages had a special atmosphere, with habits and customs which passed from one generation to another, and the village of Fordell in the County of Fife was a very outstanding example.

The old rows of houses have served their day and generation. New homes have been found for the village people in nearby towns and villages and little is left to tell their story.

This book records in simple language the wealth of character and warmth of heart that used to dwell in Fordell village. It illustrates the pawky humour and neighbourly feeling that made life worth living in times that were hard and often sorely trying. The author did not intend this book to be a classic of the English language. But by his real understanding of miners and mining folk, Bob Holman has made it worthy of its subject.

Whether you were born in Fordell, or in nearby Donibristle as I was, or just somewhere else in Scotland, you will find much pleasure, as I did, in reading these pages—so full of human sympathy.

Crossgates,
Fife,
October, 1952.

WILLIAM REID,
*Chairman,
Scottish Division,
National Coal Board.*

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

THE author thanks many of his old Fordell friends for their great assistance in writing this book. Also to Mr Morris Allan, photographer, Dunfermline, for his assistance and photos; to Mr Inglis, Alva, for use of photographic blocks. For that beautiful and encouraging friendship with the family I submit appreciation and thanks to Dr W. Reid.

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INTRODUCTION

HERE is a story of a small mining community in Scotland, close to the main Kirkcaldy-Dunfermline Road, yet with a way of life peculiar to it, a village of less than two hundred people complete in itself, inhabited by generations of the same families for hundreds of years. A community of hard-headed, practical inhabitants, with a kindly outlook, yet of the most conservative nature; they practically cut themselves from the outside world but lived for themselves not as individuals but as a village. Independent to a fault, just living on the existence line, they sought assistance from no outside quarter to attend to their needy and aged, but did so themselves with a modesty that shunned publicity. True they had limited recreation and amusements mostly as village concerns and were thus, all the more enthusiastically carried out.

In connection with their one form of employment, namely, coal mining, there were two unique features, a private railway—one of the very few in Britain—that took the coal from the village mines to a private harbour on the Fife coast five miles away, in characteristic small hand-braked waggons that had done service for over two hundred years. Like the miners the colliery proprietors were also members of generations of one family whom the miners served with unbroken devotion.

*Dedicated to the memory of my late wife Rankin
and our late daughter Kitty
without whose encouragement
the book would never have been written.*

CHAPTER I.

The Paraud

THERE was great activity at the old school house. From my position on a prominent part near the College Brae I stood watching, waiting.

From the different rows of miners' houses dressed children came hurrying out followed by such cries as "noo Tam, dinna get dirtied afore the 'paraud' or yir faither'll skin you alive." Back came the answer invariably, "A' richt, mither."

Then followed a shout, a chance interrogation cry, "Are you ready, Willie," and without waiting for a reply Tam made a wild rush round Coles Terrace to run full tilt into a companion whom he had said he would "fecht wi' ae arm tied roon ma back."

That was all forgotten, for was not this the yin day o' the year! The twa bools and the plunker they were fighting aboot when the schulemaister stopped them Tam was willing to give his rival for nothing.

I saw a number of laughing young women beautifully dressed in white coming along arm in arm from the direction of Lovers' Lone. One carried a decorated sash of many colours in which ribbons formed the principal gaudiness.

How were they dressed? Just as I expected—some with hats and some without, but all had long hair hanging behind and, in front, the inevitable "frizz."

A stop was made as the girls, seeing some male companions standing at the Gaffers Gate, cried out their customary salutations such as "Hullo Wull, has yir mither let ye oot?" and "Mind that reel you promised me." The replies were no less characteristic but the greetings and salutations were soon changed from the verbal to the more intimate and soon Wull had his arms around Jean's neck to give her a "Chinney Beardie."

If the object was to give Jean a rosy complexion then the operation was highly successful, and generally Wull's face was also red from the exertion required and the result of one or two hard slaps from Jean in her struggles to get free.

Soon a favoured young man was honoured with "try

on the sash," and when he did there were words of admiration—"Man Rab you look real like the thing." However their fun was for the time being brought to an end by a shout from an elderly man who cried out, "Here dinna mess that sash aboot if I have to wear it the day. Come on, let me see it and let us see what kind o' job you lasses have made o't this time."

"By, that's braw," was his only comment as he admired the work of the girls, who had stayed up late the night before to sew in the many ribbons which hung from the sash.

"Wha's to pit it on? You Jeannie? Come on then lass. Let me bend doon. That's richt. Noo for the usual kiss. That's fine, that taks thirty years aff my life, Jeannie."

A loud banging on a drum nearby caused a stir and there was a cry, "There's Peter Gibb the drummer wanting the Paraud to start."

Yes, I saw this scene from the College Brae as my mind went back sixty years. The boy rushing from his mother's house was myself.

The scene I had recalled was Fordell Paraud, a scene I had pictured scores of times hundreds of miles away, but here I was revisiting the scenes of my youth, unrecognised and unknown.

Coles Terrace was unchanged and no doubt it was the shape of the small diamond-shaped windows in the houses, the old school still the same, the "Lovers' Lone," the old pit in Douglas Cottages, the roof of Fordell Store, the Pannies playground, and Day Level Pit, near the unchanged Workshops, that made the picture so easy to imagine.

Yes, there it was, and as I lay with closed eyes in that field with my back to a hay rick, no cinema picture could be clearer.

Soon the rounding up by Peter Gibb on his drum did what was necessary. Near by was "Robbie Hardie"; I recognised him quite distinctly. All he wanted was to get to hit that drum, but Peter replied, "no the noo." However, Robbie, years later, replaced Peter Gibb on that drum, and realised the ambitions he had that day.

"Come on, you boys," cried the Deacon. (All men are boys on Paraud Day in Fordell. They are only men when appealed to). "We havena a' day to get ready." Then right in front went the Deacon, proud of his sash. I easily recognise him, it is Rab Penman.

"Twinny" Beveridge, the band leader, gets his men out. I recognise them all with their new uniform, including their

pill box caps. They take their places behind the Deacon. The Committee come next and the procession marches a few paces forward to allow the "Hill Women," pithead girls, all dressed in white, arm in arm and in threes, to take their place.

Then follow the villagers who never miss a "paraud." The names? Why they were nearly all Beveridges! There was Beveridge A, Beveridge B, Beveridge C, Beveridge D, and aye, there was Beveridge (Wilson) and Beveridge Dumplin'. Others were there; yes, there was Tam Dryburgh, Willie Smart, Johnnie Japp, the other members of the Penman family, Peter, Eck and Tam, with their sister, Aggie, looking on with admiration at her brother the Deacon.

Then came the schoolchildren, wonderfully quiet for a Paraud morning. The reason was that the "schulemaister," Mr James Currie, senior, was looking on. Only an occasional cheer until the procession got beyond his sight, and then they were beyond his control.

"Are you ready, boys," said Jimmy Carmichael, and at a nod of his head, Peter Gibb sounded the first beat of his drum. At the third the Paraud marched off to the tune of "Ho, Ho, The Merry Masons." One loud cheer drowned the first few notes and soon the procession was on its way.

There was no denying the Paraud was an impressive sight. The parade as it left the old school was one of which all the people in the village were justifiably proud.

In the bright sunshine of the mid-summer morning the procession marched gallantly down the road. Fordell Brass Band was on the lead, while at intervals standard-bearers carried banners, the poles of which were gaily decorated with flowers, begged, borrowed or stolen the night before from the flower gardens.

It was Fordell's great event of the year, which extended to three days, and in the celebrations no outsider was allowed to participate. The only exception was when extra bands were needed for the Paraud, and on one occasion three bands were actually in the procession. After the procession these outside musicians were again "strangers" and dare not use the fact of their being "in the band" for one day, as a means of breaking through the rigid rule that strangers were not wanted.

Any attempt to get past the rules, that could not have been more stringent had they been drafted into a constitution, was defeated by a solid village veto. This was the unwritten law of the village, which included part of Mossgreen until

recent years. "From January till January and a' day and every day, year in and year oot."

There were several who tried to break down that rule, but the attempts always failed, and if a "stranger" came to reside in Fordell he was generally frozen out in a short time.

I remember on one occasion three families of miners coming to Fordell in one day from the Lothians. There were instantly meetings and consultations, for while the ordinary stranger was not wanted, "Lowdeners" were openly detested.

They could "thole" folk from Crossgates or even Donibristle or "Dirthill," as it was called, though they would not confer the honour of allowing them to be looked upon as villagers, but "Lowdeners" to come and bide in Fordell, why it was an outrage!

Short of sending round the village bell to call a meeting and ask them to leave the way they came—namely, by Abdour and the Leith ferry—everything else was done. The women of the village discussed the "outrage" at the "wall," and the men discussed the matter at the "College." The "hill women" had the question before them at "piece time." The only ones, however, who really took drastic action were the schule bairns. The girls refused to speak to the girl "strangers." The boys went further; they stoned the boys from the schule at Mossgreen.

Mr Currie, the schoolmaster, got to hear of this and his threats of the tawse had some effect—at least the boys in attendance at school stopped the stone throwing. Still no one could stop the villagers from thinking and looking in an unfriendly way or passing remarks.

"How long must a person be a stranger in Fordell?", was often asked by those outside the sacred precincts defined by the Bulwark and the Durham Raw. In the minds of some a stranger could never become a Fordell native.

Maggie Watson, who came to the village as a bride, used to say that it would take fifty years for her to pass the initiation ceremony. Yet she was married to one of the "Berridges," as the name Beveridge was called, a family which may have been one of the founders of the village. If that is true, then Maggie has not long passed into the sacred circle of Fordellites, but no doubt to the children of the real Fordellites Maggie was always a stranger.

A friend of mine was walking past Mossgreen Churchyard one Saturday morning many years ago when he saw a funeral. The cortege had come up the College Brae.

He knew quite a number of persons in Fordell and asked

who was getting buried, but the reply that it was only a stranger put the question of identification of the dead person out of his mind.

To his surprise a month later, he found that the person who was being buried was an old acquaintance of his—a workmate who had been resident in the village for forty years.

But there was another irritant feature of the invasion of the three families from the Lothians. One of the men wore a hat. Not only so, but he wore it every day. This was unheard of.

On the first day after the man came from his work in the Lady Ann Pit, and after he got washed and had his dinner, he appeared in the Old Square wearing a bowler hat. This was an outrage—a miner, a common or ordinary miner, wearing a hat! The only man in Fordell or nearby who wore a hat “through the week” was the minister, John Clark.

The colliery manager nor the gaffer, not even the doctor, wore a hat on week days. Hidden away in a trunk in every house in Fordell was a hat of some sort, a tile hat or a round hat, but they were not for ordinary occasions. They were for funerals, not even for ordinary kirk service, and after the funeral they were carefully dusted, put into a paper bag and laid away for the next occasion when a native died.

Here was a man who wore a hat every day, even to “gaun to the toon” with his wife to carry home the week’s groceries. Why the thing was preposterous! Soon he became known by no name except “The Man wi’ the Hat.”

He even went to a quoiting match with his hat, and when the local man who was upholding the quoiting reputation of Fordell lost the match, his only excuse was—“Hoo can a body play wi’ a man wi’ a hat lookin’ on?”

CHAPTER II.

The Great Day and its origin

BY this time those of you who are not versed in the history of Fordell will be wondering what this Paraud actually was. You will have ere this associated the word with Parade, but you will be wondering why the parade, why the holiday festivity, and why it should be associated with this little out of the way and, for generations, isolated mining village of Fordell.

Well, you were quite right with the association with the word parade, but the reason why this parade should be held every year in Fordell makes quite an interesting story.

An old friend of mine, who saw many Fordell Parades, used to recite the words of a song which, she said, was composed by a Fordell man. Of this song I can only remember one verse and the chorus. They ran as follows:—

*Then we went to Anson Hill,
The barrels were there wi' five guinea ale,
And the ravens got in to spill
On the 20th day of July.*

Chorus:—

*Hurray, Hurray, for the Fordell Laird,
Lang in Fordell may they be spared,
And the miners' bounty even shared
On the 20th day of July.*

To me it seemed rather two verses of the song than a verse and chorus, but they verify a few things I heard about the Paraud. Firstly, the event was held on 20th July each year or the Friday nearest that date. The song also proves that some of the festivities took place at Anson Hill, which is still the home of the manager of the Fordell Coal Company, and opposite Mossgreen Church.

The ravens, my informant said, were not of the crow family but a name given to the men of the village of the more boisterous type who laid siege to the barrels of "five guinea ale."

As to the origin of the Paraud, I have got all my information from old inhabitants — information which has been handed down for generation, and I offer no further proof.

Fordell is one of the oldest mining districts in Scotland or England. Old shafts in fields and many in gardens walled round about, and remnants of shafts long since filled in, give ample evidence of this. Nearly every field has such an old coal pit shaft, and in several there is still evidence of wooden stairs that tell of the days when the women walked up the shafts carrying the coals in creels or wicker baskets.

The earliest coal pits belonged to the lairds or ground proprietors, and at Fordell it is well known the laird was always a Henderson, to whom I will refer later. In these early days of mining not only did the coal pits belong to the lairds, but the miners belonged to him as well, so that when the pits changed hands the miners went with them, and they had a new master whom they had no option but to serve.

The miners were serfs, and exaggerated stories handed down from generation to generation tell of how they were chained to the hutches and how any "gangrel body" walking past the coal mines was liable, as in the days of the press-gang, to be seized and turned into a serf of the mines.

There was never any doubt about the miners being serfs or slaves, but it is surprising how the stories arose of miners being chained to hutches.

There were no deep shafts in these early days, and from the appearance of coal workings at Blairadam, recently exposed by the working of a quarry for "blae" to make bricks, the bottom of the shaft was only a few feet from the surface.

There was no doubt that in the early days of coal mining in Fordell, or even at Dunfermline, it was the "crap oot," or surface seams, which were worked, the inlet being at the place where the coal "cropped out" or, in other words, came to the surface.

These days of serfdom had, of course, to come to an end, and this introduces the origin of the Fordell Paraud. The Laird of Fordell realised that the freedom of the miners was coming soon and, no doubt, being in sympathy with the movement for legislation that was going on to liberate them, he granted them their freedom exactly a year before the time when it became law, and set a splendid example and assisted in the passing of the act.

The Fordell miners, to commemorate the occasion, organised the Fordell Paraud, a day of rejoicing for their liberation.

I cannot tell you the exact date on which the Fordell miners got their freedom from serfdom, but it was a very long time ago.

I have been told that the Day Level, an underground waterway connecting all the pits in Fordell to an outlet near Fordell House, was made by French prisoners in the time of the Napoleonic War, and, if that is so, then the Paraud must have been started before that time, and may have been celebrated in the 18th century.

What is known is that the Paraud Day was near as possible to the 20th July, a date referred to in the song I have quoted above. As can be understood, it was a very important event in the village life of Fordell, for it lasted three days—Friday, Saturday and Monday. The absence of celebrations on Sunday denotes that the observance of the sanctity of the Sabbath must have also been a strong point in the life of the miner, as it was in the life of all the people of Scotland.

CHAPTER III.

Preparations and appointment of Deacon

FOR three months in the year the thoughts of the villagers were on the Paraud. In the month of May each year a written notice appeared on the pitheads stating that a meeting would be held to appoint a Deacon and Committee.

These notices were sufficient to bring a large crowd to the scene of the meeting, namely, The Pannies, a piece of communal ground between the colliery office and the Engine Pit, but to ensure a large crowd the Brass Band paraded the principal rows of houses and then made for the Pannies, followed by the inhabitants.

The Deacon of the previous year called the meeting to order, a duty that for many years fell on Peter Penman, then on his oldest son, Peter. There was little difficulty in choosing the Deacon as it was nearly always a case of re-election, that rule being only broken by death or illness.

Thus Peter would be elected again, and then would follow the election of the Committee, a word that was always pronounced with a long "tee."

Then would follow the nomination of such prominent men of the village as John Japp, James Hope, Tom Beveridge, Bob Ramsay, Twinny Beveridge, Eck Penman, Rab Penman, Wattie Muir. The Committee would be elected, the meeting would end, the band would render a few selections and would play back to the old school, their meeting-place, generally by way of the College, where little encouragement would make them stop to partake of the hospitality of Mrs Hamilton.

The Committee, with the Deacon appointed, lost no time in getting to business. Because of a special privilege by the Sheriff the Deacon of Fordell Paraud had a special licence to sell beer and spirits for six weeks before the Paraud and six weeks after it. This meant that the Deacon's house was turned into a miniature public-house for three months.

The Committee would make their usual calls on Fordell Store to ask the price of the barrel of beer. For many years

the tenant of Fordell Store was a Mr James Hamilton, son of Mr Hamilton of St. David's, but no one in Fordell used such a formal name as James, it was always "Jimmy."

Later Messrs. Fraser & Carmichael, Dunfermline, leased the premises, and in turn the managers were first of all James Dick, or rather, to follow the local custom, Jimmy Dick, now of D.C.I. Ltd., Dunfermline, and later Fred Steven, later resident in Cowdenbeath.

The Committee would inevitably tell the manager that his price was more than Mrs Hamilton's—price that was in every case a shilling or two less than the figure wanted by the Fordell Store. Then when the price was reduced to that of Mrs Hamilton's, the Committee would march to Mrs Hamilton and inform her that she would get her share of the order of beer at the same price as they were getting it at Fordell Store.

It was only when Mrs Hamilton and Fred Steven met to discuss matters, that they found how they had been done, and yet the next year the same trick was played.

The whisky the Committee bought direct from the Grange Distillery at Burntisland—always a grand excuse for a jaunt to the coast town.

The special licence to the Committee was seldom abused. The barrels of beer were kept in a cellar either at the Fordell Store or at the College and were taken away in pails as required. The Deacon was the keeper of the keys of the cellars.

In the days before the McKenzie Act restricted the licensing hours there were a few late nights, but auld Peter Penman did not favour such events, and with his customary, "Working day the morn, chaps," he got his room cleared at quite a reasonable hour.

"Eck" Penman, who told me that he was never the Deacon but often had the chance of the honour, and that his oldest brother, Peter, still alive and resident in Brand's Buildings, Crossgates, and over ninety years of age, was reputed to be a very strict Deacon and did not give the habitues of the house at 1 Monteith Terrace too much rope or too much drink.

"He steyed in this very hoose I am steyin' in noo, as oor fether, Peter Penman, afore us, the auldest Deacon I mind o'," said Alexander. "Peter is the only Deacon left, and wi' Davie Philip, noo bidin' in Cowdenbeath, and me, the last members of Fordell Paraud Committee."

CHAPTER IV.

On the March

A GAIN I visualise the Paraud on its way to the Big Hoose at Fordell after the procession has made a tour of the village. They proceed by way of the mineral railway on which is taken the coal to St. Davids, a private port on the Forth, owned by the proprietors of the Fordell Colliery. Of course a Fordell Wattie never says St. Davids, but the broad version of the name—St. Dauvids.

Along the railway the road breaks off to Fordell House, and I can see the happy gathering approaching Fordell House with Fordell Brass Band still leading. I can see Lady Henderson coming forward to welcome the marchers. After the part of the welcome which is verbal and is reciprocated, I can see the "spiritual" welcome which is very much to the liking of the older men in the procession and they are soon toasting the hostess, the lairds who have gone before, and all persons connected with the Henderson family.

In another corner the pithead girls are each presented with a pound of sweets and the merriment increases, to be broken into by a general invitation to inspect the gardens.

Then comes the time when they must return to Fordell, and the procession again forms up to make the return journey by way of Crossgates, Springhill and Mossgreen. The whole countryside could not mistake that it was the day of Fordell Paraud.

At Anson Hill, the home of the colliery manager, everything was in preparation for more festivities. The manager, whether it was in the days of Mr Robertson or Mr Morton, received the people and, according to the song, "The barrels were there wi' five guinea ale." Some idea of the exuberance of the male section of the paraders can be gained by the following line—"And the ravens got in to spill."

There was something for everyone, old or young, and the fun went on apace until well on in the night. The children, tired with their play, went home to bed, but not so the older people.

CHAPTER V.

The Paraud Denner

TO the menfolk who were in the know and in favour with the Committee the attraction was the Paraud Dinner in the house of the Deacon—and what a night!

The principal item on the menu for the dinner was “saut fish,” mostly “saut skate,” a dish that required days of preparation. Not only days, but nights too, were required, as for days previously the salted skate and cod had been lying on the tiles of the house to get it into the right condition. During the Paraud Day this had been boiled and was ready to be served on that night of nights in the Fordell calendar.

I can quite understand a smile of understanding on your face at salt fish being the principal item on the menu that night. The same suspicion often entered my mind as it entered the minds of many more, and I venture to suggest that we are all right.

A miner's house then, as it has been the order for many years until a few years ago, was a “but and ben.” The “but” was the kitchen and the “ben” the parlour, bedroom and sitting-room all rolled into one.

It was in such a two-roomed house that the Paraud Denner was held for many years at No. 1 Monteith Terrace. No. 10 Downing Street to Londoners is of no more importance than No. 1 Monteith Terrace was to the Fordell villagers.

There were “tatties” with jackets off and “tatties” with jackets on, and the meal was served with beer drawn from a barrel in the corner. When the crowd was largest, this meal was served in both the “but” and the “ben.”

The chairman, the Deacon, made everyone feel at home and with song and music, in which a melodeon or fiddle figured, the fun went on until midnight, when the revellers reluctantly took their leave, reluctant because of the knowledge that the chairman could not use his customary warning about next day being a working day.

A little after midnight a policeman would make his appearance, but all he could see were small groups of the oldest men discussing, in not too low voices, of how many

Parauds they had seen, what to their minds had been the best Parauds, and what each of them would do if he was the Deacon.

There is nothing like a drink just a little over the moderate stage to revive memories and to make all the world sociable, and in the early morning at many a corner-end stories were told of Paraud Day experiences of many years before. The glories, traditions, and accomplishments of Fordell Brass Band were always brought to the fore, and as a large number of the gathering at the Paraud Denner were members or past members of the band, stories of the band's performances were told with pride. These stories were inter-mixed with details of plays that brought out hilarious laughter.

Such incidents detailed in great detail, often at the expense of one of the company or a relative, refreshed the memory of other such incidents and often "Do you mind o' yon?" started another. Real danger was introduced when someone started an argument on the merits of the original flute band compared with the brass band that followed, but the danger of a first-class lively scene was averted by a timely jocular remark. Gradually the gathering started to disperse in twos.

As the door of one of the revellers was reached, a feminine voice would ring out, "Are ye no' comin' in the nicht, Wull. You had better say 'guid nicht,' or 'guid mornin'' raither."

"A' richt, Leeb," one would reply, "I'm jist comin' in, just wait a wee while till I see Tam roond the coarner." A few minutes later one reveller would get home shouting about how he would meet his pal of the previous night at the sports to-day and he was "gey weel shure he would bate him in the auld man's race."

"You never supped the parritch," came the reply.

The last words, however, were more pleasant and were generally, "I'll see you the morn," forgetting the day had been begun already by about two hours.

CHAPTER VI.

Fordell Ball

I WISH I could take all my readers back sixty or seventy years with me to the old School in Fordell on the night of Fordell Ball.

Some may ask if the village could only boast one dance in the year. Certainly not; they had several dances, including the Foresters' Ball, the Gardeners' Ball, and others, but in the life of the village there was only one "Fordell Ball." It was always on the Friday, the first night of the Paraud celebrations, and was held in the Auld Schule.

Now just have a look into the building, which you will see is crowded, and between nine o'clock and ten o'clock others are still being squeezed in.

There are the two fiddlers on a suspiciously rocky platform made up of hall seats. Yes, it is Willie Berridge and partner from Crossgates and they have just finished playing the first dance, which is the Grand March round the hall and then there is the call "Get set for the Circassian Circle."

The changing of partners in this dance always acts as a kind of re-union, and the different greetings round the hall is ample indication that the company of dancers are about the same as the previous year.

One thing will have struck you also, and that is that there is no array of ball dresses and frocks. That is quite true, as it is a recognised rule that the young ladies must come in the dresses they have worn during the day's Paraud celebrations.

There is no doubt you will have recognised by this time that this is responsible for a more than usually happy gathering, and the want of that reserve generally associated with the wearing of orthodox ballroom garments.

Unlike the other dances in the village, no written or printed invitations were sent out. They were not required. The dancing element of the village had been looking forward to this night, and all who cared to come forward were admitted, until the room was filled to its utmost capacity. Even when that stage was apparently reached, others got in.

In the earlier days of the Fordell Ball, there was the

selection of the belle of the ball, and stories are still plentiful, and handed down with a certain amount of pride, of how someone's aunt, mother, or even grandmother, was the belle of Fordell Ball one particular year.

The young ladies marched round the hall and a selection committee, after careful judging, for their decision was always very much criticised, chose the belle of the ball. This honour meant that the chosen one's partner for the night had to pay forfeit sweets to the young ladies and something equally acceptable to the men.

Gradually the selection of the belle came to be recognised by the company that a certain young lady was the prettiest dressed and most attractive present, but no forfeits were paid.

There is an old song to the tune of Kelvin Grove still remembered by those who frequented Fordell Ball, and the Chorus went as follows:—

*Are you gaun to Fordell Ball, bonnie lassie oh?
Are you gaun to Fordell Ball, bonnie lassie oh?
If you gaun to Fordell Ball, I will dress you like a doll,
Wull you gaun to Fordell Ball, bonnie dearie oh?*

The last line of the chorus was generally changed to include a young lady's name instead of "bonnie dearie," and among names remembered to this day are Annie Daly, Martha Beveridge, Jeannie or Janet Livingstone.

Reading between the lines of that song one can understand the method of invitation to the dance, which was generally by word of mouth by the young man to a girl friend several weeks before the night of the ball. A young miner generally brought his sweetheart, but a young man not so suited had to make his own selection and to get one of the popular young ladies he had to ask early.

As the Fordell Ball was not strictly a partner dance but more of a village festival, young ladies not honoured with a formal approach for partnership that night used to go in small numbers, in a manner unattached. Young men were there, too, in numbers, who were also unattached and they were saved the expense of a pair of dancing shoes — the recognised present by a young man to his partner for the night.

Of the ladies who went to the ball a few were employed in linen factories in Dunfermline, and they travelled to their work from Crossgates Station in a special factory train in the morning, returning in the evening.

The largest number of young women were pithead girls

for, after all, it is a miners' holiday, and time of rejoicing and thankfulness.

The ball was always a great success. It was one great happy family, and with jigs, reels, waltzes, lancers, quadrilles, polkas, "Flowers of Edinburgh," haymakers, etc., the time sped on only too quickly. The dance was held in the middle of July, and some young men had reached their third collar before the end was in sight. The recognised time for stopping was six o'clock, but often the fiddlers were busy as late as eight o'clock.

The Fordell Ball has been but a memory for many years now, but to-day many a one looks back with fond regret and with loving remembrance to the pleasant nights spent at this dance.

The famous song, "After the Ball," with its suggestion of broken hearts and shattered romance, could not have been written about the Fordell Ball, for the scenes, after the dancing was finished, were always ones of gaiety and signs of deep-rooted friendship.

CHAPTER VII.

The Paraud Sports

ALL had departed from the ballroom in time for breakfast, but there was no thought of bed that day for the revellers, for already the younger element of the family were up and dressed, their one thought being how they were going to fare at the Sports of the "Paraud," which had entered upon their second day.

That day was specially set aside for the older folk and the children. With one accord they made for The Pannies where the sports were to be held. These sports, which were made up principally of races for boys and girls, young women, old men and women, always took place there. All the children of the village were there and all were eager to run a race of some sort. Whenever a certain number of children of a certain age were collected together, a race took place. The winners received coppers in prizes from a large bag and then another race was made up.

When races galore had been run off and as many consolation events had been added, until such time as no child seemed to be without a prize, the young women, who had been gathered together in groups in the background, would come forward for their turn. This was a sign for encouraging remarks from the young men in the vicinity, but they did not seem to bother the competitors who seemed to be more interested in what start certain competitors were to get. A taller one would remark that a certain other competitor might no' be very tall but she was wee and soople and cood fairly rin. One thing was certain and that was that each one was a trier until she saw the race was hopeless, and she would resign quite gracefully with a smile and a word of encouragement from the young men that "she cood try next year when she would be a year aulder." Then the old women came into their own. With their skirts tied up to their waists they too were real triers and ran as fast as their strength and their breath would allow them. They did not get money prizes, but the reward for their bravery and speed generally took the form of parcels of sugar and tea.

The old men races always provided laughter, especially

the race for the oldest class, a race which had been discussed shortly after the last paraud and would be the subject of discussion until the next paraud. I can visualise with the aid of memory, a very short man getting a start from a tall man, amidst protestation from the taller competitor, who stood with one hand on the head of the smaller one, the time he was trying to impress the handicapper how guid the wee man was. The 'David' of the race, however, got his start all right but it did not get him the prize for the much taller competitor passed him at half track, when he seemed to step over him as he passed. This started the discussion of what happened the previous year when the smaller man used to state afterwards and won by pure science. When asked to explain the part that science played in the race, he used to say that he was running that weel that he had to gie the tall man a start. He sune got up to him, but the big man swung his airms like flails and he cudna get past.

"But I sorted him," he said.

"Hoo?" was the inevitable question.

"I ran throo atween his legs."

As far as the prize was concerned, however, it did not matter who won. The prizes were always in liquid shape, bottles of whisky in sizes graded to suit the prizes. Not only did the prize-winners go to collect the prizes, but they all went and very often all the competitors went to a convenient place not too far away to see "what kind o' stuff the Committee had got 'the' year."

There is one word in the Fordell dialect I could never understand and that was the word "the" when it was used in the place of "this" as seen in the previous sentence.

CHAPTER VIII.

Spirit of the prizes

VERY often, in fact on nearly every occasion, the competitors all belonged to a number of "cronies" and one would say by way of invitation "Come on up by. There's naebidy in and we'll hae quietness seein' the auld wife and the bairns are at the sports."

When the prospective host has given the assurance that he had as many "glesses as gaun roond," they all marched off with their prizes, special care being taken that the prizes do not come to any misfortune on the road. A daughter, who has successfully thrown off the effects of the "ball" the previous night, is at home tidying up but she is not too enthusiastic in her reception of her father's guests. She starts off, "Oh, it's you and a' your cronies. It's a fine time to come when ye ken my mither's no in."

"'Deed lassie," says the youngest of the old men, "dinna fash yersel about us. We'll be easy to pit up wi'. We're no' seekin' tea; a' we want is a pickle glesses an' maybe a joog o' water."

"So that's it. I see it noo, you've been runnin' the auld men's race and you hiv the prizes there. I maun hae been dovey no' tae hae kent that afore noo. Weel, fether, if it's glesses you're efter, I dinna ken whaur you are gaun tae get them. You'll mind fine you folk broke gey near a' the glesses we had in the hoose last paraud and, mair than that, you've brocht it tae my mind you didna buy new yins for them as you a' faithfully promised. There's only twa I ken o' in the hoose and they are the yins my mither brocht frae the exhibition. If you brak them you'll ne'er hear the end o' my mither's tongue. I'm shair I'm daft to lippen them wi' you. The rest o' you will need to tak cups."

With this she departs and soon returns with the exhibition glasses and three cups.

"I suppose you would be makin' a fule o' yirsel the day again rinnin' at The Pannies in the auld men's race. It's a guid job my mither is no here to hear aboot it or wisna there to see you. She would be black affrontit."

This statement was received with loud laughter by all.

"Weel, and what are you laughin' at? I dinna see ony-thing funny at a lot o' auld fules runnin' in their stockin' soles and makin' general exhibitions o' themsels. Forbye, I ken fine, and I never saw you, that you would a' hae your jeckets aff and there's ma fether's clean shirt lyin' oan the bed, and he wis telt a' the mornin' tae be shair an' pit it oan afore he gaed tae the paraud sports."

"Weel the last we saw o' yir mithir was when she was sprauchlin' on the grund claimin' that she was first in her race and it was her that broke the cotton week."

"What dae you say? Do you no' think shame o' yersel, fether, alloooin' ma mithir tae dae ony sic thing as run a race and her wi' they seeatic pains a' week?"

"I wudna bother ower muckle aboot that gin I were you, Kate. If yir mithir hisnae got the pun o' tea she has the second prize onywey and, mair than that, I saw she cam' in a guid lot in front o' the wife next door, and that'll mak' her forget her seeatic pains for a wee while."

This must have brought about some pacification to Kate for, turning round, she said:

"A' richt, fether, that's as muckle as I can dae tae redd up the noo. There's the glesses and the cups and there's the cork-screw. I'm awa' tae the toon but mind you, when I come back and things are no' richt, I'll promise you a' somethin' . . ."

"Dinna promise ower muckle, Kate," said Wull, "but see and enjoy yirsel. Dinna keep Tam oot ower late. He was tellin' me he is to be on the pumps at the William the morn's mornin' and ye ken that means a hauf-five rise."

After a last look at the mirror and "You're lookin' rale braw the nicht" from Jimmy in the corner, she turned round with her hand on the handle of the door and said very deliberately: "If ony o' you yins bother ma mithir aboot her fa'in', weel, look oot."

Before any reply could be made, Kate was gone and the old cronies at once settled down to enjoy themselves with their bottle and have a quiet crack.

There was silence for a while after the door was closed until the host quietly drew the cork and soon was measuring out each man's first share of the prize. The five glasses and cups were then held up, after each one has waved aside the water jug, and Wull said, "Weel weel, here's tae the next year's paraud."

"Hear, hear," said the others. That was all before they were testing the merits of the contents that came from a black bottle that originally was intended to hold another brand.

"Here," said Tam, "what name is on that bottle. Does it say Glen Devon?"

"It canna be that," said Wull, "Glen Devon is a water works."

"Fine I ken that, but maybe it wud be mair appropriate to ca' it Cullaloe. That's Burnteeland waterworks."

"Eh, luddie, the Burnteeland folk ne'er put a' that water intilt. That's been the Paraud Committee makin' up ither prizes for the year. They'll hae tae gie the Band Committee a bigger fee the year as they are needin' anither new skin for the big drum."

"I see it's gettin' gey sair patched," said Jimmy, "and they canna jist gaun back tae the big hoose askin' for anither skin for the drum, withoot haein' a better excaise than the yin they made up last time."

CHAPTER IX.

The Markinch cabbage, the cabbage pat and Jimmy's big tattie

THE talk touched many topics before it finally centred on the coming Fordell Flower Show and the merits or demerits of the different gardens. Wull joined in with, "I see you've got some fine phloxes the year."

"Aye, they'll tak' some batin' this time, Wull. I just thoct you went ben the hoose to get a guid look o' them as weel as the blue violas you've haen sic a notion o'."

"Weel, luddie," said Jock, "if somebody's eddication had been as guid as kennin' a' aboot floers, you wud a' haen a strong rival the year wi' your phloxes and your dahlias."

"Hoos that?" said Wull.

"Weel, I just happen tae ken that Wull was wantin' tae send for some guid yins. He got the names o' them a' richt that the gairdener gied him but he cudna spell dahlias or antirrhiniums and neither him nor his auld wife was ony further forrit efter raikin' the hoose upside doon tae try an' get hud o' a catalogue that Wull pit by the year afore."

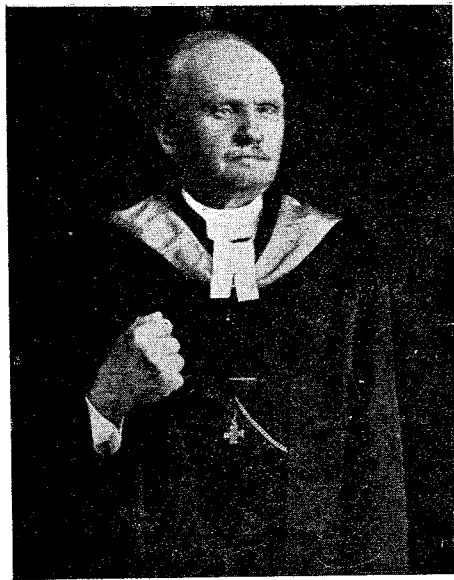
Wull strongly denied this. It was marigolds he was efter, he said, and he didna ken whether there were two "r's" or one. Forbye, he had as guid dahlias as onybody in Fordell and he never got them frae "Dirthill" either, like some folk he kent. "Aye, and just ae nicht afore the show at that."

Jock saw trouble arising so he broke in wi' "I see a man in Markinch has an awfu' big cabbage."

"Fordell can grow as big a cabbage as ever grew in Markinch," said Wull. "I'll back my cabbage against ony Markinch cabbage. Markinch whiskey may swall a man's heid, but it'll no' swall the heid o' a cabbage."

"That's naethin'. A big cabbage is neither here nor there. I was up at the Grossgate foondry the ither day and Maister Wilson was makin' a big washin' pat up there, an oot bye job, it was that big. You and a big cabbage! This job wud gie wark tae three men for a week onyway."

"But this cabbage," said Jock, not to be outspoken, "was



Rev. John Clark



*Robbie Hardie
who played the big drum
in Fordell Band*



Fred Steven



Mr. and Mrs. Smart and their family

that big that it'll tak' a ferm horse and cairt tae tak' it tae the floor show."

"Weel, what aboot that? You will see this pat for yirsels as it has been ordered to bile your Markinch cabbage in efter the show is ower."

For a while the quartette laughed at Jock's expense, but it did not disturb him, and with a "Weel, that deserves anither dram," the black bottle was brought into service and this time it was emptied.

"Weel, here's tae Jock's Markinch cabbage," said Wull.

"It was a thumper," said another, and Pete added quietly, "I can see anither thumper comin'."

Jimmy disregarded the remarks and proceeded with the story he was itching to tell.

"My grannie yist tae bide awa' in the country, and ae day she had a ca' frae a man wha yist tae ken my grand-faither awa' in foreign pairts," he began. "My grannie lat oot that she had to depend on her gairden to keep the hoose the gither, and afore he left he said that ae time my grand-faither had did him a guid turn and as a sort of peyin' back, he promised he would send her a kind of manure that wud mak' her vegetables grow to a fell size.

"We got a postcaird frae the railway company tellin' us tae gang for a bag lyin' at the station. It wasna a big poke—about fourteen pun or sae — and when I took it tae the grannie's and opened it oot, I saw it was white mealy stuff, somethin' between washin' soda and saut.

"My grannie went tae the dresser tae get the wee bit paper the man had left wi' the instructions on hoo the stuff should be yaised, but losh me, she had lost it and, waur still, she cudna mind what the words were he telt her aboot what tae dae with the stuff.

"Weel, when the time came to plant the gairden we were in a fix what tae dae and hoo tae apply it. We were feared we might spile the hale gairden if it was owre strong, so tae mak' shair wark we wadna dae ower muckle wrang, I suggested that for the time bein' we wud pit some roon a seed tattie and if it was a' richt we wud pit mair roon the cabbage and ither things as they were growin'.

"It was jist at that time I got word tae gaun throo tae the wast to drive a stane mine through a hill. At least I was tae bide there as lang as learn ither there wha werna up tae the kind o' wark on hoo it was dune. I was away for a month or twa and by the time I got back I had forgotten a' aboot the tattie until I went to see my grannie.

"I gaed tae her hoose and she wasna in, but there she was in her gairden starin' at the tattie shaw. It was six feet high and the ground was a' crackin' roond aboot it. I was jist as dumbfoonert as she was and we decided, as it was still in flooor, tae let it alane for a while. This was jist afore the Simmer holidays and I gaed awa' tae spend them wi' an uncle in the Hielands. The pits werena gaun ower weel at the time and my uncle, wha was a fermer, asked me tae bide a week or twa tae help him wi' his hervest.

"The first thing I did when I came back was tae rin doon tae my grannie's. But when I got there it was vexing. There she was greetin' in the gairden and a' that was left was a muckle big hole like a faun-in pit shank and tattie shaws a' ower the place.

"I didna ken what tae dae, but I was shair I wud get tae the end o' that tattie tae ken whaur it went. I searched high and low. I telt the police, but they were bate ana! Then ae nicht, just in the mirk, I was gaein the grannie's dug a walk when we wandered efter a rabbit into the middle o' a wud and we cam' across an auld quarry. In that quarry a tink and his family were bidin', but there was somethin' auful queer about his hoose. Then a' at 'yince'—(the cronies were too enthralled to check him for saying 'yince' instead of 'aince') I saw his hoose was a muckle tattie howked oot, wi' sugar bags for a door, aye, even to the lum reekin'."

Jimmy continued that he made the tink confess that he had lifted the tattie ae dark nicht but he pleaded for the sake o' his wife and bairns no' tae tell the police.

"Gies your glesses," said Tam, "the second prize has got tae be disposed o' yet. Jist divide the hauf bottle in five. We need a gey stiff gless tae swally that thumper o' Jimmie's."

Soon all the company were standing and talking nearly all at one time but the general agreement arrived at was that that day's sports were even better than last year and they were the best before that time. That opinion was accepted by a short silence which annoyed Jimmy. He did not like his story disposed of that way. He would have liked an argument but they remained speechless. This story had been too much for them and at last, to break the uncomfortable silence, he changed the subject by saying quietly, "I dinna think they young lads are rinnin' as hard as they did when I was a callan. I min' whan I was in America . . ." He got no further for Wull said firmly, "Look here, Jimmy, the whisky is a' dune and we canna staund ony mair o' yir stories withoot it, and it'll need tae be less wattered than the stuff the nicht, so

we'll jist wait for anither nicht tae hear aboot yir exploits in America and hoo you broke a' the records there. You canna hae been lang in America but I'm beginnin' tae think that it was lang enough tae learn the Yankees hoo tae brag aboot the great things they can dae there. If that's richt we maun admit you made a grand job o't." "Here's tae next year's Paraud," said Wull, and the cronies were soon making for their respective homes, having spent a very enjoyable day, but with the tattie story still uppermost in their mind.

CHAPTER X.

The Brass Band

ONE of Fordell's foremost institutions in bygone days was the Brass Band, but I have been unable to discover when it first began to function. According to my old friend, Eck Penman, there was first of all a flute band, but this was merely the forerunner of the Brass Band, destined to become one of the most famous in the county of Fife.

One of the oldest members of the band is Davie Philip. I recall Davie confiding in me that he was not born in Fordell but at Cowdenbeath, and to prove his statement he showed me his birth certificate, which bore out he was born at Dykeneuk on the 9th October, 1862. I was puzzled to know where Dykeneuk was at Cowdenbeath, for I pride myself that I know every place in the district by name. Davie informed me that Dykeneuk was the proper name of two houses, demolished recently, which stood at the end of Foulford Road with the junction of Old Perth Road.

"But that was called Crosskeys," I said.

"Deed aye, laddie, but when I was born it was ca'd Dykeneuk."

Davie told me that he was very young indeed when he went with his father and mother to the farm of Bankhead at Otterson, near Aberdour, and later came to reside in the Moss Row at Fordell. Davie first saw Fordell Band at the Paraud when he was seven years of age, and he never lost touch with the band after this. He was thirteen years of age when he got his instrument, and right proud he was.

At that time the conductor was "Twinny Rob" Beveridge, who was also the cornet player of the band. Nowadays, a full brass band consists of twenty players, twenty-four being the regulation number for contest work, but with Fordell Band twelve players made a big band and twenty-four "was somethin' oot o' the ordinar."

The players were all notable musicians and in most instances were relations. As stated, "Twinny Rob" was the solo cornet player and conductor. The first conductor Davie remembers was Willie Woods, an ex-soldier and well-known brass band conductor, who took a great interest in the Fordell

Band. Not only was he a conductor but he wrote brass band music.

Mr Woods had a son in the band, Willie Woods, a cornet player, who could not read a word of music, yet he was a marvellous player. All he required was to hear a piece played once and he could play it right away.

Another cornet player was Archie Thomson, whose father 80 years ago played the G trombone. Willie Sharp played a trombone. He was a member of a well-known musical family and his son, Robert Sharp, later residing in Crossgates, was Parish Clerk at Aberdour. Then there were the Gibbs; Geordie played the horn, Dick the B flat to bombardon, and Frank the cornet. The Gibbs were the best known of Fordell families, especially Geordie, who resided for many years "ower the brig" at Cowdenbeath, a district that includes any place beyond the railway bridge at the Old Station. In that quarter many of his descendents still reside. Frank Gibb, who also removed to Cowdenbeath, resided in East Park Street. He was for several years a member of Cowdenbeath Town Council, filling the position for a term as Hon. Treasurer of the Burgh.

Peter was a big drummer, a position also held by Archie Brown. Robert Hutton, scarcely known by any other name than "Robbie Hardie," was side drummer at that time until he got his heart's desire—the big drum. It always struck me as peculiar to see a side drummer in a brass band, but Davie Philip assured me that this was quite in order at the time.

Then we must not forget the Hopes, another Fordell family name. There were several families of Hope who are now scattered in the district and may be found in Mossgreen, Cowdenbeath, Crossgates, and even in "foreign" places like Dunfermline. Wull Hope played the euphonium and Tam the tenor trombone.

There was always a suspicion among certain people that the Hopes were not real Fordell natives but that they originally belonged to Springhill, at Crossgates, beyond the line of demarcation that marked the Fordell boundary.

The Hopes and their descendants maintain that was not true and that they were originally Fordell inhabitants, as much Fordell in their "bluid" as the "Berridges," aye, or the Penmans either. "Forbye," they would say, "whaur did the Berridges come frae onyway but Dirthill?"

These were some of the arguments used at the pay office on Saturday night, as the Fordell Store, or at the "College," when big Tam Dryburgh would say "he could fecht all the

Hopes, Berridges and Penmans ane efter the ither wi' ae hand tied ahint his back." But anyone from outside suggesting that either the Hopes, Philips, McArthurs, Berridges, or Penmans, were not originally natives of Fordell would have to deal with a united front.

In the band there was one Beveridge eighty years ago besides "Twinny Rob" and he was "Tom Bow," who also played the cornet. His name was Thomas Beveridge, but for the sake of identification amongst the clan of "Berridges" he got an extra name—not a middle name, but one added—Tam Beveridge and then Bow as an afterthought, the same as Beveridge (Grieve).

Davie Philip was a bandsman for thirty years. This was not a record, for other players were in the band for that length of time and in some instances longer. Willie Woods was longer in the band than that, and if a Hope suggested he was playing flat, he would retort that he could not be flat as he had played in Fordell Band for over thirty years and longer than onybody else, Hopes and a', thus falling into the trap laid for him to start a "freendly row."

CHAPTER XI.

Well known players

CONTINUING his reminiscences, Davie said that Willie Duncan also played a bombardon and later was a well-known cornet player. Tam Dobbie was a member as well. That introduces the question of strangers in the band.

At one time Donibristle had a brass band. Of course it never compared with Fordell Band. According to Tam Dryburgh "Fordell Band could blaw Dirthill Band ootside in." The Donibristle Band fell on evil days and went out of existence. Even Fordell folk, however, would admit that there was an anterrin player in the band "guid enough tae tak' his place alangside Fordell Band." One was Robert Seath, who stayed in Earl's Row, and was for many years a shop-keeper in the village of Donibristle and it was agreed to honour him by allowing him to play for Fordell Band. That was the real reason the Fordell folk gave their consent to allow Seath in the band, but if anyone wanted a first-class row all he had to say was that they took him to spite Crossgates.

The same reason was given by outside bands for Fordell Band taking Tam Dobbie, a cornet player from Lochore, who, in the days before buses or even bicycles, used to walk from Lochore at least twice a week to attend practice. Later Dobbie joined Bo'ness Band and one day he met him at Kinross at the July Fair in charge of the Bo'ness Band.

While talking to his old bandmate, he took occasion to admire his band trousers and found that they were ordinary black moleskins with a moveable stripe down the side. This struck me, he said, as a very convenient experiment as, with the stripes off, the trousers made good working garments.

He had a great admiration for two men in Fordell Band—Twinnv Beveridge, the first man he knew who could triple-tongue the cornet, and Tam Dobbie, who later went to Leven, who also could perform, what seemed to him, this difficult execution on the instrument.

In the Laird of Fordell the brass band had always a good friend, and the gift of an instrument to replace an old one

was always a consideration. One Laird, George Henderson, once gave them two instruments — a bombardon and a euphonium. Then they had a hall free and were supplied with light, the paraffin coming from the Company's stores at the workshops.

They had practices on Monday and Wednesday of each week and on Saturday afternoons, when not engaged, they had a march out. The treasurer was always there on Saturday afternoon with his black book, for each member of the band had to pay his shilling every pay day.

"I dinna ken hoo some o' us managed that shilling wi' wages at three bob a day, but we just had tae pay it an' that was a' about it. It's surprisin' whit ye can dae withoot if you hivna the siller tae get it," he said, thinking of the past when he and the other members of his family had "tae dae withoot" for the sake of the band.

"Our conductors never cost us very much," he added. "Willie Woods used tae write his ain music, and Twinny Rob was sae eager in his love o' the band that he never thocht o' payment."

Another source of revenue was their many engagements. "I have seen us," said Davie, "workin' only three days a fortnicht and there was nae five day week and paid for six shifts. We had a when paid engagements, and sometimes we played and a' we got was a pie an' a pint. It seemed a' games committees wanted Fordell Band an' we yist tae hae lang trails. I've seen us at Leslie Games on Thursday, Markinch Games on Friday, an' at the Paper Mills along there on the Saturday.

"We were aye engaged for the Miners' Gala an' went wi' Fordell folk, except aince, when they hadna the siller tae pay us, and we went a' the same. We got an engagement to mairch along wi' Cowdenbeath miners, hooever, an' we were weel aff that day for we got nine shillings a man. That was lang afore Cowdenbeath had a band o' their ain. Ither games we attended were Ha'beath, Milnathort, July Fair at Kinross, Pittlessie and Ceres."

"How did you manage to get to those far away places like Ceres?" I asked.

"We went in brakes and waggonettes," Davie replied, "an' we aye got hame a' richt. Never the same day, of course, but we aye got hame somehow. We gaed to Guar'bridge aince and had tae pay £4 for brakes. An' we didna get awa' efter the games were feenished. No, the committee started us tae play reels an' they collected the pennies—ye ken, reels wi'

a penny from ilka dancer. We got hame a' richt—weel on i' the next day.

"I mind aince o' the band gaun tae the Forth Brig when it was gettin' built. The workers there had sports o' their ain an' I tell you they were guid sports. They had beer in big bath tubs an' each man had jist to gaun forrit an' help hissel wi' a joog.

"Wha gaed us the brakes? Weel, there was Philip, Dunfermline—ye ken him that ran the bus twice a day frae Dunfermline tae Lochgelly. Ye cud set your watch by the time Chairlie, the driver, passed through Crossgates in the mornin'. Then auld Eck Campbell, o' Cowdenbeath, used tae gie us a brake gey often, an' sometimes he forgot to ask payment. Then if we were stuck Erchie Hodge, o' Cowdenbeath, had twa waggonettes, an' I dinna ken hoo we payed him, we maist likely never.

"We yist tae mairch roon' the raws on Saturday nicht an' I feenished up at the Fordell Store. Jimmy Hamilton had the Store whan I mind o't first, and when playin' he yist tae gie us oor first dram free. Syne we gied a reel or twa in front o' the Store an' when we felt dry we jist gaed back far anither yin. We didna charge the pennies on they nichts but I can tell ye they cam' frae a' awer tae thae reels.

"Us young yins that drank the lemonade aye looked forrit tae thae nichts at Fordell Store. Efter the playin' stopped till Jimmy Hamilton closed his shop at eleeven o'clock we didna gang straucht hame for the lassies used tae tak' tae the band lads."

"How did Fordell Band get the name of the Herring Band?" I enquired.

"That happened afore I was in the Band," said Davie, "so it must hae been a lang time ago. The way it happened, as far as I was telt, was ae nicht the Band were comin' in frae some ayont Cowdenbeath late at nicht, and some o' them got a lift frae a herrin' cadger in his cairt. There happened tae be a box o' herrin' in the cairt and the band chaps helped themselves tae the herrin' and hid them in the bells o' their instruments. Ye can see hoo the chaps wi' the big instruments got the maist herrin' but it took a lang time tae get the stink o' the herrin' awa.

"I suppose, tae, ye'll hae heerd o' the Band bein' ca'd the 'Drunken Sixteen.' Weel ye can tak' it frae me they didna deserve that name. I dinna mind o' seein' ony player ower drunk tae play, an' mair than that, they thocht ower muckle o' their instruments tae get ower fu' so that they cudna tak'

care o' them. Giein' them that name looks like a Crossgates or a Kelty Band trick for, mind ye, bandsmen werena ower parteeicular whit they said aboot ither bands, but they were the best o' freens for a' that."

CHAPTER XII.

The Flooor Show

FORDELL has always been well known for its floral beauty. Much of this fame is due to the great interest taken in the gardens by the Lairds of Fordell Castle who have been from generation to generation proprietors of the colliery and the lands of Fordell.

The Lairds of Fordell were responsible for the prizes for the best-kept gardens, introducing a competition that brought into existence a strong rivalry, no doubt friendly, but a rivalry that could not be keener. As near as I can remember, there were about forty prizes in all and these prizes were responsible for such garden displays that large numbers of visitors from Crossgates, Donibristle and Cowdenbeath came to view them on the Sunday following the judging.

With very few exceptions, all the gardens were entered for competition and in such rows as Coles Terrace, Douglas Cottages and the houses on the other side of the road that led to Aberdour there were no such exceptions. They generally were where the facilities did not allow a well-kept garden.

I will try and picture Coles Terrace over sixty years ago. In the end house was David Muir, whose descendants are to be found all over West Fife. He nearly always won first prize for his garden, helped to a larged extent by his son, Wattie Muir, who became a newsagent in Bowhill. Next to Davie Muir came John McArthur, another prominent prize-winner, and then, in order, John Scott, Jamie Keddie, James Rolland, Walter Muir, Thomas Beveridge and, lastly, Duncan McKay, all keen competitors for the garden prizes.

Davie Muir, as I have stated, nearly always won the first prize, but close on his heels came Michael Johnstone, in Douglas Cottages, and Mrs. Stenhouse the blacksmith's wife, in the first house past Lovers' Lone. Nancy was never far down the prize-list.

The day of the judging of the gardens was a red letter day in Fordell and the judges were closely watched, in some cases quite openly, but, in a large number of cases, from behind blinds and pot plants which decorated the front room or the "ben" of the houses. The judges were Mr Ramsay

of Fordell Castle; the head gardener of Dhuloch, Inverkeithing; and Mr William Cook of Donibristle. It was always a fortnight before the flower show, which was always early in September.

Willie Cook was a man one could not easily forget—very tall, about six feet, but he was best known for his long red beard. An authority on everything that pertained to a garden, he was well known in the whole of West Fife. A miner by occupation, he had no thought or time for anything else after his work but gardening, and in nearly every flower show in West Fife, and sometimes beyond it, Willie was to be seen either judging or giving advice—always free. His own garden in Donibristle was so large that it surprised one to know how he could possibly find time to do anything else in his spare time.

The three judges always arrived late in the afternoon and, from a place of vantage where they could not be seen, interested family groups would gather and carefully watch them and try to get an indication of how they were impressed with the different gardens.

The presentation of the prizes was a memorable night in the village. In the meantime, the prize-winners had goods to the value of the prizes won and they were placed in the Old School. There were no motor cars in these days, but the private railway coach of Fordell House was brought into use. This coach, not a Pullman car by any means, was attached to the colliery engine, and the party, including Lady Henderson, was brought to the village and, under the chairmanship of Mr Morton, the prizes were presented by her Ladyship.

The prizes were of all kinds. Davie Muir got his easy chair and special congratulations on being the first prize-winner. The others got their awards in turn. They ranged from standing paraffin lamps and linen to boring graith and drills. Lady Henderson had words of praise and encouragement for each one and a special word to Nancy for continuing among the leading prize-winners for keeping her garden so attractive.

Immediately the judging of the gardens took place, every intending competitor set his mind on the flower show. Show boxes, frames and all the different contrivances for showing flowers, etc., were unearthed. The committee arranged with the colliery manager to get wood for the platforms and the services of the colliery joiner to fix them up.

Competitors selected the different flowers and vegetables

they intended to compete with, and not only did they nurse them with all the different ways of bringing them to their best, but they set a night and day guard on them.

Despite careful vigilance, however, many prized flowers and vegetables disappeared just previous to the show, and a competitor had to be very sure of his convictions before he could tell the committee that a flower or turnip on the stand was his property, but had mysteriously disappeared from his garden a night or two before.

I recall one occasion when a well-known competitor had a beautiful red or pickle cabbage which he thought should lift the prize in this class. He was afraid, however, that it looked too tempting and as he and his sons were both on the night shift he conceived the plan of inserting a safety pin in the inner leaves of the cabbage. Coming home from work one morning he found his cabbage had gone.

On the morning of the show he paid particular attention to the red cabbage entered for competition; he recognised his own when he saw it, and proved its identity beyond doubt when he found the pin.

One of his sons told me he took the law into his own hands and placed the cabbage below the stand, which meant that it had been withdrawn from competition. Not long afterwards another competitor came on the scene.

"Where is my red cabbage?" he asked.

"You mean oor red cabbage?"

"No, I mean the one I sent in."

"I ken. The wan we grew an' the wan you sent in is the same cabbage. There it is alow the stand, an' it's gaun tae bide there."

There was such determination in this latter statement that the matter ended there and the cabbage was not shown.

"Why did you not report him to the committee?" I asked.

"Ah, weel, the kennin' that he was fund oot an' that I had this daur ower him, I thocht pit him aboot sair enough," was the reply. "Forbye, what guid wud that dae tae the floorer show? Efter a', ye shud ken as weel as onybody that they tricks were mair deevilment than onything else. I'm awfu' gled that I copped him at it, no' for the sake o' the shillin' o' a first prize or the vailey o' the cabbage, but ye ken hoo I wud hae felt years efter tae hae the joke turned against me."

The flower show was not confined to Fordell. Donibristle folk were allowed to compete. The otherwise concrete rule

was not broken to oblige outsiders but to give the Fordell folk a chance to prove that they grew better vegetables and flowers than they could in Donibristle. It was a keen fight. On the one side, we had the Muirs, Johnstones, Beveridges, Penmans and Smarts from Fordell, out to beat the Harrowers, Beveridges ("Dirthill" Beveridges), Forresters, Peter Cook and the Robertsons from Donibristle. The rivalry did not end there, but was taken to the Donibristle show as well, and the show in Dunfermline or Cowdenbeath was regarded as the decider.

CHAPTER XIII.

Fordell "Store"

I CANNOT come across any person who can tell me the age of Fordell Store, but from the appearance of the building, of which the Store is a part, I venture to say that it is one of the oldest buildings in the village. Moss Row, now demolished, was probably the oldest. It was built to accommodate the miners who were employed in the pits in that locality. Then would follow the Old Square, a continuation of the Store buildings, also demolished, and in front, Cannon Row, which could boast of the only double storey building in Fordell, with the exception of the Store. The erection of these houses, or "miners' raws," brought about the existence of the Store.

The only other buildings at that time would be the School and Schoolhouse, the Auld Raw, in rear of the present Coles Terrace, and two houses at the south end of Wemyss Square. With the exception of the School and the Schoolhouse the other houses are demolished. Since that time, Coles Terrace (1850), Monteith Terrace and Douglas Cottages were erected, and, in recent years, a few of the most modern of houses have been erected on and built near the site of the Lang Raw.

There is no doubt that the Store buildings were erected by the proprietors of the Fordell Coal Company and if the Store was in existence in the early part of the nineteenth century it was one of the many such Stores owned by proprietors of collieries and other works all over the country where goods were exchanged for lines supplied to the workmen instead of wages and must therefore be one of few such buildings.

My friend, Davie Philip, first remembers Fordell Store when it belonged to Jimmy Hamilton, and at that time it was a fully licensed public-house. From the size of the premises today it could not have been a very large public-house, but no doubt it was ample for the needs of the men in the village who sought its comforts.

Its busiest time was, no doubt, on a Saturday when the Brass Band used to halt there, after marching round the "Raws," and play a programme of music. The programme

was always interrupted after the first tune when the men of the Band accepted the invitation of Jimmy Hamilton to "hae a drink on me." After the first "roond" the rest of the refreshments were always paid for, and no doubt Jimmy lost nothing by his hospitality in "stannin' his hand" on the first occasion.

Jimmy Hamilton left the Store and commenced a public house at the Coaledge, always spoken of as "The College," on the Dunfermline-Kirkcaldy Road, just a short distance from Coles Terrace. Messrs. Fraser & Carmichael rented Fordell Store as a licensed grocer's, after Mr Anderson had had it for a while as a butcher's shop. Robert Borthwick (Robbie) was manager for Fraser & Carmichael for a time and then followed John Finlayson, to be succeeded by Jimmy Dick, now of D.C.I., at Dunfermline.

Following Mr Dick came the well-known Fred Stiven who, during his long stay in Fordell, became very popular, but never popular enough to take away the designation of "incomer" even though he married "John Tamson's dochter."

At the same time, Fordell folk never recognised John Tamson, or, as he was better known, Fiddler John, as a Fordell Wattie. John, they said, belonged to Crossgates, and they never forgave him for his adverse criticism of Fordell Band. They always said his opinions were the result of jealousy and the fact that his son played in Crossgates Band. They quote him as saying that "Crossgates Band withoot oor John or Jimmy is a noise like a cat pirlin' in a tanker" (tankard).

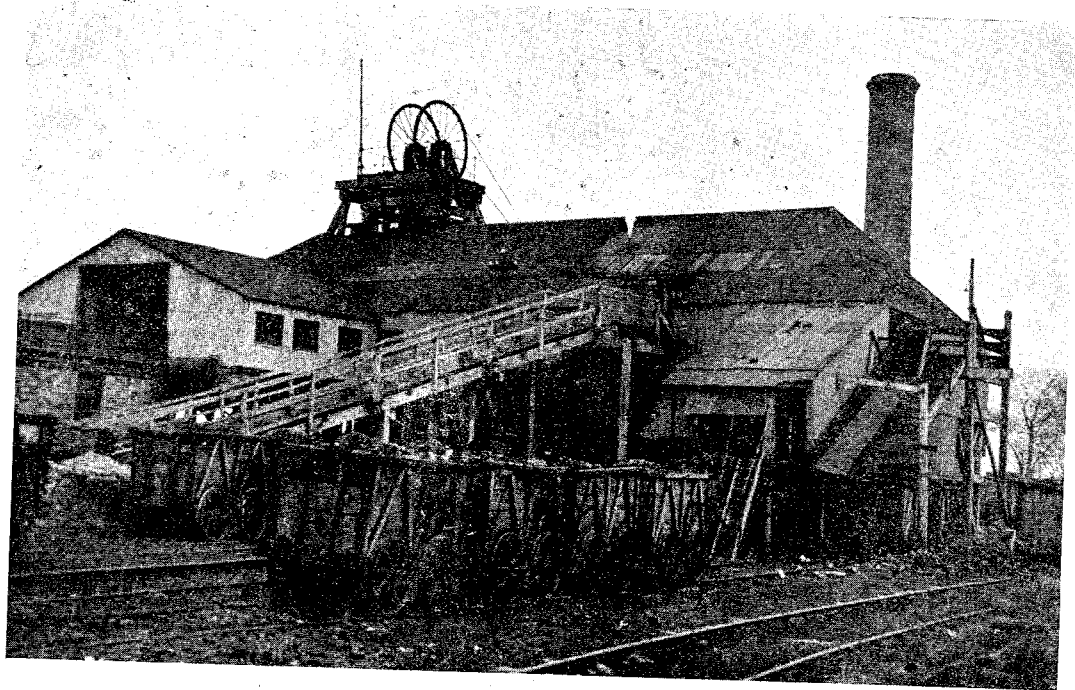
However, Fred became very well-known in Fordell and knew the doings of the village to veriest detail. The source of his information was Fordell Store. He thus could tell when Twinny Berridge got a new "place" in the Lady Ann, when Wattie Muir got a new lot o' pansies better marked than Michael Johnstone's, when Willie Berridge got a new doo, Mrs Japp a new cat, or the exact date after the Foresters' ball that a well-known couple started to "gaun thegither."

Fordell men did not like the idea of the taking away of the "sittin' doon" licence and they used to make the best of the disadvantage by buying the beer by the gallon or half-gallon at a time and drinking it on their "hunkers" at the shop door or at a convenient place not far away, the tumblers being supplied by the obliging Fred.

Objections were made at the men drinking in this way and the result was that a police-sergeant came along one day



The Coaledge Tavern



William Pit, last of the old Fordell Pits to be closed

and gave out instructions that beer could only be supplied in bottles. Fred immediately obeyed the instructions to the letter, if not the spirit. He discovered that a "two-pound sweetie bottle" held exactly a pint of beer, and his customers, instead of getting their carrying out beer in a half-gallon or gallon measure, got it supplied in "sweetie bottles."

If the law was not quite satisfied, the police instructions were carried out, and so was the beer.

At the same time, there was a certain amount of pawky and ironical humour in drinking beer from a bottle labelled "Good Templar Drops."

The Store was always the busiest place in the otherwise quiet village. This was especially so in the evenings and nights when the lights of the oil lamps in the windows used to bring round the youths of the "Raws." There the wives used to meet, both inside and outside, and there the village gossip used to be detailed and, in very many instances, added to. There the boys and girls used to play at all sorts of games, to be always quarrelled by Fred. To get their own back, they used to indulge in some sort of game meant to annoy him. For instance, one boy would get hold of another's bonnet and throw it into the shop, leaving the victim with the painful ordeal of going in for his cap or suffer the penalties of going home without it.

Fred in later years used to say that I arranged to get my cap flung in so that it fell on a barrel of apples and, rushing for my cap, I used to take along with it at least one apple. I never could convince Fred that I could not do such a thing.

He also told of how on one occasion he caught me and chastised me in the back shop.

"Aye, an' yer faither came doon tae gie me a row for hittin' ye, but when I telt him the richt wey, you was a vexed laddie that yer faither kent onything about it."

The Store took the place of the local newspaper, and when any bit of spicy news or news of any importance came in from the outside, one heard the expression on every side, "I'll need tae gaun tae the Store tae see if it's true."

Attached to the Store building on the side next the workshops and the Day Level Pit was a flag pole. The hoisting of the flag during the day was to celebrate a village event, but at night when that flag was sent up it was an intimation to the miners that, for some reason, either the want of wag-gons or a breakdown, that the "pit wasna workin' the morn."

Despite all the pranks that were played, Fred cannot remember a time when this means of intimation that the pit

would not be working was abused, even after a "congenial" night when a number of the miners would have relished a "long lie" rather than tramping to the Lady Ann, half-a-mile away, at "half-six" (the Fordell way of saying half-past five) in the morning.

CHAPTER XIV.

The Fordell Watties

WHO were the original Fordell families? I have been surprised during my inquiries to find that many of the families whom I thought were natives of Fordell were what they call "incomers."

Michael Johnstone, a well-known man who, for over sixty years, took a prominent part in the doings of the village, was never accepted as a Fordell man. Maggie Beveridge, married to Thomas Beveridge (Grieve), also told me that she did not belong to Fordell. She first came to the village when she was married over fifty years ago and resided in the same house in Coles Terrace for close on half a century. "Deed, laddie," she said, "you better gaun tae some Fordell folk for your information. I dinna belong tae Fordell, forby I have only been here for fifty years."

When one remembers that the miners of Fordell got complete emancipation from serfdom probably about 1799, after which they were not reckoned as part of the colliery and its plant, but had their freedom to go where they wanted, it makes it difficult to trace the families in Fordell at that period.

The principal names are McArthur, Penman, Muir, Gibb, Hope and Smart, while there may have been a family of Japp. One of the last direct descendants of the Japp family was Hannah. She, like many of the young women of Fordell, in married life became a Beveridge. Mrs John Japp, a widow who passed away lately, the oldest of her generation alive, never considered herself a Fordell woman for, like Maggie Wilson, she came to Fordell when she was married to John Japp and was only there for approximately fifty years. Before she passed away she was the oldest generation of five generations of the family all alive.

The father of the family which took a great part in Fordell life was a Peter Penman, the most prominent member being Peter Penman, who resided at No. 1 Monteith Terrace. Mr and Mrs Penman had a large family, the eldest being Peter Penman, who was ninety-four years of age and resided at Brands Row, Crossgates. Like his father, he was Deacon of Fordell Paraud on many occasions. One of his sons—Alex.

Penman—who resided at No. 1 Monteith Terrace, used to tell of how his mother used to work in No. 12 Pit, now disused and filled in. As all women were taken out of the pits in 1842, one can easily understand that the family can be safely stated to be a Fordell one.

They were a long-lived family, Aggie Penman passing away a short time ago. Another member of the family was Phemie Penman, who also became a member of the great majority by marrying a Beveridge.

Davie Philip, who played in Fordell Band for many years, whom I referred to before, was always classed as an “incomer” although he resided in the village for over sixty years.

Davie was fourteen years of age and was working for a few years when one of the boilers at the William Pit exploded, killing the engineman, Andrew Baxter Arnott, great-grandfather of Mr A. Arnott, Cowdenbeath, and four of the pithead girls or “hill women,” as they were called. One was Davie’s sister, Isa Philip, another was Helen Cook, while the other two girls were named Harrower and Paterson.

Mention of Davie Philip and his association with Fordell Band recalls another of these “tall” stories connected with that famous combination.

The Band had been playing at Lammas Fair and was returning in the small hours of Sunday morning. Several members of the Band had imbibed rather freely, and when passing Mossgreen Church someone remembered a statement made at Crossgates that the kirk “wasna built stracht.”

The story goes that four bandsmen went to each of the corners which they thought gave the kirk a “laich” (low) side and started to raise the building. When they thought they had raised it high enough one shouted “lower” and they all let go.

However, one of the heavier men was standing on the foot of a smaller man, who at once yelled out—“The hale lot o’ you come ower here. You’ve let this end doon on my fit.”

The story continues that they all lifted and “slew” the kirk to get his foot out, and now the kirk, besides being off the level, is also off the straight.

After that diverting story let me return to Fordell’s noted men. Among these must not be forgotten Wattie Muir. Wattie was of strong religious views and long before 1870, when the Mossgreen School was erected, was in charge of the Sunday School that met in the Reading Room in the Fordell Store

buildings. He had the help of other voluntary teachers, including Miss Graham, daughter of the minister at Crossgates.

Not only did Wattie Muir cater for the religious needs of the young but he held services on Sunday evening in the Reading Room for the older people, when the address was given by the ministers and evangelists both in the vicinity and from as far away as Edinburgh.

The Reading Room also recalls the name of Michael Johnstone. Once a year there was a very important event in the village — the Reading Room Supper. The chairman, Michael Johnstone, always made the “boys,” who included men both old and young, feel at home. The expression often heard today—“Weel, lads, I’ll no’ ca’ you gentlemen as I ken you too weel,” has been attributed to Michael one dinner night.

CHAPTER XV.

"Paddy" Clark and the "Berridges"

THERE were other outstanding characters in the village of whom mention should be made, among them John Japp, who always rode the white horse on the day of the Forester's Walk and was the "heid" man at the sports that followed, and the Rev. John Clark of Mossgreen Church. The minister was better known, and no less respected, by the name of "Paddy Clark," and did a great deal of good work in the village.

Mr Clark always made his visitation a matter of special enjoyment. He liked nothing better than to get among older men and discuss current events and especially politics.

I always remember one particular Saturday Mr Clark came into my father's house shortly after dinner time. My mother had to leave a little afterwards to go to Dunfermline for the week's provisions, but before she left, Mr Clark and my father, an ardent Home Ruler, had started on the pros and cons of Home Rule for Ireland, the work of William Ewart Gladstone. I was an interested listener, for the North Ireland brogue of Mr Clark sounded pleasant to me and, like my father, I was an admirer of Gladstone.

Before leaving, my mother gave instructions not to let the fire out, to be sure and light the lamp when it got dark and be sure to draw the blinds. I left an hour later.

The discussion and arguments waxed hot, and when my mother returned six hours later the two were in darkness, cowering round the last red ashes of the fire. Neither seemed to want to leave the scene of the interesting discussion long enough to go to the coal-house to keep the fire in. My father said in excuse, as he was the principal culprit, that he did not notice the fire going out, and Mr Clark said he enjoyed talking with the only light the glow of the dying embers.

Mr Clark was in great demand as a lecturer. He gave lectures frequently in the Reading Room and went out to different places, including Cowdenbeath, Dunfermline, Crossgates, etc. He scarcely ever travelled in a train, and on many occasions I have seen him leave Cowdenbeath at

ten o'clock at night, at the conclusion of his lecture, to walk the three miles back to Mossgreen Manse.

I must include in my list of Fordell's outstanding men the Beveridges. The truth is I do not know where to start. They were here, there and everywhere, and so many had the same name that the difficulty would be to be explicit enough to indicate the particular one to whom I was referring.

The Beveridges belonged to Fordell, but some folk were wont to say that Fordell belonged to the Beveridges. On one occasion, there had been complaints against some of the Fordell inhabitants who had to report to the Laird of Fordell. When he asked their names all he got was "Beveridge," until he cried out, "Are they all Beveridges in Fordell? We will have to get a new clan introduced there, somebody with a name like McTacket."

CHAPTER XVI.

Schule days and the Dominie

IN these days of advanced education, when every child is given the opportunity to be educated beyond the stage of the three R's, it is very difficult to understand the real position of higher education that faced Mr Currie. If there were bursaries, I never heard of them for the Fordell children, and, after the sixth standard, the next stage was Dunfermline High School. The expenses caused by sending a pupil to Dunfermline, providing school books (as this was long before the days of "free" books), was entirely beyond the means of the Fordell miner. The average wage of the miner at that time did not exceed a pound a week, which provided for only the bare necessities of life, but, despite this, Mr Currie succeeded in finding the ways and means of starting quite a few on the road for higher education. How he did it I could never understand, I could only guess. If my guessing was correct, it gave me a bigger problem, namely, to know how the then small salaries of headmasters could afford to help financially, and how he got the extra necessary to carry on the good work. Still, he did manage to get a few through the High School, and some the University, to become professional men, and some to "wag their pow in a pulpit." As can be imagined, these were only a few, but he was very proud of them.

In those days, a boy or girl could leave school on leaving the fifth standard and the big majority did this through necessity. Miners almost invariably had large families and the boy or girl, on passing the fifth standard, had to go to work to eke out the family income. For the boys there was the coal mine and for the girls the pithead and, in some cases, the linen factories in Dunfermline. In both cases the wages were very small and they only provided what was necessary to keep the house going and nothing for luxuries. Even the temptation of a watch, by Lady Henderson, to every pupil who passed the sixth standard had to be turned down to get the benefit of a shilling a day (the wages paid to the boys and girls when they became part of the mining industry). The leaving school at this age was looked upon

as a natural stage in the lives of the Fordell boys and girls, just following on what their parents had done before them for generations. Other few exceptions were the boys and girls who had older brothers who were working and these formed the sixth standard pupils and, from these were taken the apprentice clerks and apprentice shopkeepers in such places as Crossgates, but the demand was so small that nearly all the boys and girls had no alternative to the work about the mines.

CHAPTER XVII.

Schule leaving

CONTINUATION classes were not known till later years and then they were fee-paying and the average ambition of the boys was to become a "drawer" in the pit and later to become a worker at the coal face to get the full wages of a miner.

For the girls there was even less to look forward to in employment. To become a pithead girl was to remain one until the day she was married and then settle down in the village as those before her had done. She never doubted for a moment the possibility of her marriage. That was accepted, not with an optimism as many do, but as a reality. In this she had every encouragement from the lives of all the girls in the village who had gone before her. There was never an old maid in the village. One reason, and the main one, is that a young miner never looked upon the future in any other way than that when the time came he would be married. After a few years in the mines he got work at the "face," generally under the supervision of his father, who trained him in the art of "howking" coal, on roof support for his safety, and the firing of explosives to loosen the coal. After that, he looked out for a "place o' his ain" when he would be allocated a small part of the coal "face" in one of the coal seams to produce the coal. These were all places where the miner's pick was his principal tool. This was long before the days of the coal-cutting machine. The coal was first of all loosened by "blasting" as in a quarry. Holes were driven by a boring machine when drills were used of various lengths, and explosives of various types were used. The coal thus loosened was filled into hutches and the rest was "freed" by the pick.

It was only after a young miner had been a "drawer" for some time, when he took the loaded hutches to a point where a pony took a "raik" (a load of hutches) to the pit bottom, that he was promoted to be a "filler" of hutches. To separate the big pieces of coal from the dross he used a ribbed shovel, known as a harp. In due course there was as much dross as fill a hutch. This harp or "daft man's

shovel" as it was often called, was intensely hated by the miners as it meant that the small coal had to be shovelled twice and payment for it was very much less than round coal. It was when working as a filler he served his apprenticeship as a miner, when he was taught the important things in "face" working, how to get the coal and, most important, his own safety and the safety of others. In such work he was generally working under his father who, when he thought that his son's education had been completed, gave the manager a guarantee that the young miner could safely be trusted with a "place o' his ain." He was then given a tonnage rate of wages from which he had to pay his filler and drawer. When he got that, his marriage followed soon afterwards on the promise by the manager that he "wud get the first empty hoose."

CHAPTER XVIII.

Coortin' days

DURING this time he had been courting and his progress in his work and the getting of the house determined the date of the wedding.

The courting started generally very early in life, as marriages at Fordell took place when the couples were about twenty years of age. When it did start neither he nor she could put a date. If they both belonged to the village, the couple, in all probability, were in the same class at the "schule" and walked together up the lane from Coles Terrace, past the old Bulwark Pit and pond. They may have found work at the same pit, she on the pithead and he, first of all, on the surface, playing the same pranks until he got a job "alow" ground. The asking to "tak" her to Fordell Ball would probably set a date when the village looked upon them as "lad and lass." From that stage everything was taken for granted. Certain nights in the week were set aside for the "coorting" and these nights were recognised, not only by the couple, but by companions and parents as well, and no household duties were imposed on the young lady on these nights.

The actual courting was a very solemn occasion. It consisted, when the weather was suitable, of a walk on the "Eberdour" road or on the railway line to the Lady Ann and the William Pits, even though they were only traversing the same road as they took to their work during the day. If the weather was favourable they would sit on a fallen tree or a bank off the road and stay there until darkness crept on. Conversation was never a strong point and if silence can always be looked upon as golden their courtship must have been bliss. One reason of their lack of conversation was the limited subjects they could converse on because of the limited activities in social life in the village. Family affairs, which included nearly all the village, were touched upon lightly and even discussing future and past events, such as the Paraud, only brought mono syllables in reply. At last, as if the thought had struck both simultaneously, they would both rise for their return home when silence

would again prevail. During the evening it could be fairly stated that there was no declaration of affection, for that was safely taken for granted, even when the walk was finished and the couple were finishing their courting for the night between the outside and inside doors of the girl's home, when there was a deeper silence than ever that was broken occasionally by a cough or other such warning by the father that he was coming out to have his last look round and his last "draw of the pipe," or from the mother that she was coming out to take in the washing.

The exception was, of course, when the young man was on the "back shift" or "night shift," which did not occur very often. If the courting had been going on for some time, she generally stayed at home when she helped her mother or she attended to the "bottom drawer," which may have been a trunk, of course, into which she stowed away articles of clothing she made often with the help of her mother, as part of her "providing." This was composed mostly of linen which was stored away with complete confidence that it was not placed there in vain or that the bridegroom would be any other person than her "lad." The progress of the bottom drawer "providing" was very often an indication of the date of the wedding, determined finally by his progress at his work.

The courting proceeded on the same quiet lines of confidence between the happy pair who did not expect the parting kiss, not even after they were engaged. In fact, the proposal never entered into courtship. If a miner's wife was asked when her man proposed to her, she would laugh at the idea and say, "Losh, Wull never proposed tae me. I kent fine efter the Forrester's Ball that I was gettin' him and he was as shair that he was gettin' me, and, mair than that, the hale o' Fordell was 'every bit as wise.' Whan he got a 'place' in the Lady Ann he telt me that there was a hoose for him in Monteith Terrace and it was time to arrange for the 'waddin'" and that was a' that was tae it." This latest development of the "coorting" of Wull and Jean, though never doubted by all those who had watched its growth, provided an added thrill to the village and something extra for the girls at their work, the wives at the "wall" when they met to draw water and discuss the latest news and rumours, and marked the time when the whole village took a keener interest in the happy couple and the approaching "waddin'."

Wull's position in the home of the forthcoming bride

takes on a new footing. He is at once accepted, not now as Jean's "lad," but an immediate relation. He is given the "run o' the hoose" and only on occasions, when the couple want to discuss private affairs, do they adjourn "ben" the hoose. The "but" was the kitchen where the family dined and where the father and mother slept along with the very youngest of the family. The "ben" was classified as the "best" room and there slept the older members of the family which, during the day, was only used for special occasions. Occasionally, during the "coorting" in its last stages, the couple had that room to themselves on a wet night, but now all that has changed, and the forthcoming relation to the family becomes on very intimate terms with all the members and told "mak' yirsel at hame Wull." He gets information about the relatives, most of which he has known before, and anecdotes are told about the pranks and doings of the parents on both sides when they were lad and lass.

Wull is told "tae be shair tae bring along his fether an' mither tae their tea," and Wull makes a promise that they will be "shair tae came." The date of the wedding is the first important item and this is intimated by the bride, generally to suit the New Year holiday or the summer holiday, so that the couple can have a honeymoon of two days, generally with one of her relations in one of the larger towns. When this is not possible day trips are arranged according to the time of the year, a town at New Year time or a holiday resort in the summer.

CHAPTER XIX.

A Fordell waddin'

AS one can readily understand a Fordell wedding was not a private affair confined to members of each family, but it was a village function.

The first thing to be discussed was whether or not it was to be a "peyin' waddin'." This used to be almost unanimous many years ago when the Auld Schule, which later became the Band Hall, was taken for the occasion, as, being a village of one happy family, the difficulty was in knowing whom to invite and whom to leave out. There being no other hall or suitable building big enough for the occasion the Auld Schule solved the problem. Another problem was how to provide a marriage feast for such a large crowd and with the fund at the disposal of the bride's parents that was only solved by making a charge for admission, usually five shillings, or, as was more convenient, ten shillings a couple. Two male friends of the happy couple took the money at the door and guests had the satisfaction of knowing that they were not piling up a debt on the bride's parents that would take years to liquidate. In later years, however, over sixty years ago, there was a tendency for a change when there were a few instances of "private" weddings. In these instances, there was very little change in the proceedings, one being that the guests were invited formally instead of inviting themselves. It was absolutely necessary when the Auld Schule was not available and no house in a miners' row could accommodate all those who wanted to be present, a state of affairs easily understood when the whole village was like one large family and inter-married to a very large extent. For instance it would take more than one house to accommodate all the Penmans and Beveridges.

With a "peyin'" wedding all difficulties about accommodation was solved, as the Auld Schule had room for over a hundred guests, and domestic arrangements were not upset in any way. There were two long tables in the hall with a table at the top of the hall for members of the wedding party who were taken there in the "cab." The others walked and were given their positions as they entered the hall. The

last to arrive were the bride and best maid to find the groom, the best man and minister waiting. Their approach was heralded by a yelling crowd of youngsters with "here's the cab" and the guests took their places to form passage through which the bride and maid walked to the strains of a piano or melodeon. The minister, almost invariably Mr Clark of Mossgreen, soon put the wedding party at their ease, especially the 'groom, who said and did "as directed."

After the formal signing of names, the bride and 'groom marched up and down between the tables with the seated guests and received the congratulations of the entire company, not entirely enjoyed thoroughly by the 'groom as he was the victim of all kinds of banter from his pals. Then followed the toast to the bride and 'groom by the minister, to which the bridegroom replied after shouts of encouragement from his pals. This was done in a few words, as he had forgotten in his excitement the phrases he had been learning from memory and he then had his laugh at the predicament of the best man when replying for the best maid. Then the servers came on the scene and the best man, divesting himself of his coat, attacked a big steak pie as he asked all present who wanted pie to hold up their hands. Two other large pies came on the scene and soon all the company were enjoying themselves to the "full."

Previously two sections of the village had participated in the rejoicing. They were the children who participated in the "skoorie" of coppers thrown amongst them at the door by the best man before the wedding actually took place, but after the knot had been tied he would go to the door where he knew were a number of young and old men who wanted to drink the health of the happy couple and he handed out either one or two bottles of whisky. Very often, in their eagerness to participate they forgot the toast, but the neglect is unnoticed.

After the repast, the company occupied the seats round the hall, the tables were cleared of the crockery, the floor was swept and the night's programme started with the grand march, headed by the newly-weds. There was never any lack of music, as, besides the piano brought in, this was the band hall, musical instruments of all kinds were at hand and very often the players were there too. As well as the usual square dances and the popular waltz, there were games for the children and the young men and women. During the resting periods, the vocalists, who were well-known to the audience, sang and whether or not the songs were appropriate to the

occasion they were loudly cheered. Amongst the oldest of the guests were to be found singers of old-time songs, mostly in dialect, and they did not escape, although they didn't try hard, and such songs as "Robin Tamson's Smiddy," which starts as follows, were to be heard:

*My mither ment ma auld breeks,
And, oh! but they were duddy, oh,
And sent me get the mare shod
At Robin Tamson's Smiddy, oh.*

So the fun went on till well on in the morning. The mothers of the happy couple used the night to get better acquainted and the history of each family was discussed in the most minute detail.

With the excuse of taking some of the "good things" at the wedding to some invited guests who, for some reason, could not come, the bride and bridegroom left the hall with a cheery send-off from the guests, who cried out all kinds of advice, divided between the bride and bridegroom.

CHAPTER XX.

A private waddin'

NOW and again there was a private wedding and it was favoured because of family details. Maybe the bride was a "stranger" to the village. Oh yes, occasionally such a person came into the lives of the Fordell Watties. There was the case of Maggie Wilson, born in Kelty, who came to the village to be the bride of a Beveridge and although she remained there all the rest of her long life of nearly eighty years she remained a "strainger." Then there was the case of Jenny Arnott who came from Crossgates when a "bairn." Her family settled down there and she married Johnnie Smairt and stayed altogether nearly seventy years, bringing up a large family. At her golden wedding she confessed to me she was "aye a strainger in Fordell" and never accepted as a native.

When a private wedding took place it was for some personal reason and took place in the home of the bride. No doubt the statement that a wedding took place in a "but and ben" will cause some surprise, but a very important feature must not be left out, the "hoose next door." Without the house next door and, with luck, if there were one on either side, many of these weddings could never have taken place. "Guid neebors" was the rule almost without exception in the village, which will have been generally understood by this time. The door of one was always open to members of the family next door, another strong evidence of the happy family village. In cases of trouble, sickness or accident, a sympathetic neighbour was a friend indeed, and it was to her the afflicted one went for sympathy and assistance in the full knowledge that she would not be denied. Should a mother be sick, the neebors would combine to relieve her of all domestic duties. They would send in a daughter or would go themselves or "tidy up the hoose," make the meals and attend to the general comforts of all the members of the family. In time of sickness, worry and even mourning, she also mourned and was a great comfort in affliction, her kindly words and tactful disposition providing a means of relief to the bereaved.

In time of rejoicing, such as a wedding, the same spirit was manifest and everything was placed at the disposal of the bride's father and mother including the furniture, the crockery and accommodation. From the bride's house was taken all the superfluous furniture for the occasion and stored for the night with a "neebor" who supplied all the chairs, plates, and cutlery required for the large gathering. The "but and ben" were both laid as dining rooms and round the walls were the chairs or, if available, forms from the Sunday School which was again the Auld Schule.

In the case of Wull and Jean, a private wedding was decided upon and at once arrangements were made. The list of invitations was made out with a great deal of difficulty as accommodation was limited and relations must have preference. It was a simple matter to know where the word relations could be applied but where to stop was a more difficult problem and it was generally understood that the list was subject to alterations.

For a month before the event presents came along, but a night, two days before the ceremony, was set aside for the exhibition of the gifts, when tea was handed round. In Fordell in the selection of wedding presents Shakespear's advice was generally taken when the presents were neither "rich nor gaudy" but usefulness was the one thing in the minds of the givers. Two nights before the event the bride and her mother looked after the invitations which were neither printed nor posted. The two started out and made a round of calls to give personal invitations. They started with a plan of a route and followed it, with so long at each house—a time-table that was never kept.

If the bridesmaid was available she accompanied the couple, and passing by the door on either side, as they know they could not be done without, called at the first house on their list.

When they got inside, the mother imparts the news that they were giving out "biddings" to Jean's waddin'. If the inmates were not relations the reply was generally that they were surprised at getting a "bidding" as there were plenty "o' their ain folk to fill the hoose" but if there was room "they wud be pleased tae be there."

"Weel, that's settled, and the cab will ca' for you."

"Dinna fash wi' a cab for us, we can easy walk there" is brushed aside with the remark "We're haein' a cab and there is nae need tae walk."

The talk conveniently turned to wedding presents and a

daughter announced that she had laid by a pair of sheets as she worked in a Linen Factory in the toon and she would bring them along some night. She was thanked for the information and the bride took a mental note which was very necessary to avoid duplication. The mother in the house suggested that she give the couple a washing tub, and a scrubbing board, and the reply was "that will come in very handy." This information was also carefully noted and the visitors left for another home and by this time the news had proceeded them and a somewhat similar scene followed. In one house the man said "he'll no' see them stuck for their first cairt o' coal," while on a few occasions an invited guest gives the information that he was "weel acquaint" with a farmer that had real guid dung and "he wud see that he'll drap a cairt load on the wey tae the Alice tae get a cairt o' coal." Only Fordell watties realised that this last wedding present was not so ridiculous as it will strike outsiders today or even sixty years ago, as the "gairden" took the foremost place in the life of the village and instances, where a name was common, such as Beveridge or Penman, a particular man was often recognised by his reputation in the growing of a certain flower or vegetable, such as "Pansy Wullie." This was a variation of the habit of adding a letter to the name for identification as Beveridge A, Beveridge B, and so on.

Gradually this visitation came to an end and when that time came a careful study is made of the chance of anyone having been forgotten and, if so, that was at once remedied. There was never any question of the supply of music, as more than one fiddler either volunteered or was pledged to come, through his parents. Generally there are two, one to relieve the other.

"Whan are you gettin' the key o' the hoose?" was the question that started an arrangement of the bride's companions to start cleaning operations. This generally took two days before the wedding and the last night finished with "trying" the floor with dancing. The men folk were well warned to be "shair and wipe your feet." The curtains for the windows appeared as if by magic and pictures appeared on the walls, very often Willie Gladstone and Burns and Highland Mary, the favourite statesman and poet.

Early next morning, all were busy in the bride's house. The larger pieces of furniture were taken into the houses next door and the tables were laid with the necessary crockery. The arrival of a cab started the activity as it brought

in its train of all the youngsters in the village. There was a special cheer for the minister, Mr Clark, as this was the intimation that the last guest had arrived. Soon the bride and best maid entered the building from the front door of a house next door, by way of the garden, quite unnoticed, into the front room, and when the 'groom and best man took their places in front of the minister, they walked into the room to the strains of the Wedding March, and general admiration of the bonnie bride. Before this stage the minister had made certain the necessary papers were at hand without which the marriage could not proceed. Mr Clark, more affectionately known as "Paddy Clark" to his knowledge and silent approval, soon made the party feel at ease. The bridegroom felt his hands in the way, but the best man used one to feel his waistcoat pocket to assure himself that the wedding ring was there when wanted and the service started with the famous Wedding March.

There is little difference in the ceremony from a "peyin'" wedding, with the exception that it was more of a family affair, especially in the procession of the happy couple among the uncles and aunts, cousins and nephews, and the greetings were more intimate. The various toasts were proposed and the bridegroom and best man felt greatly relieved when they had said their little prepared speech which, though learned to memory, was never recited as written and practised. Mr Clark was in his element, for he was a well-known humorist, and the fun was increased by his loud laughter at his own jokes. A slight noise at the door was the announcement that the pies had arrived and a little later they were brought in, to the relief of the various helpers. There were two, one going to the top table and the other to the other table. The best man attended to the first, having previously taken off his coat, and he was asking what each guest wanted, from pie to roast beef and chicken, but out of that pie came all the fare, the excuse for the absence of the chicken being that the hen promised had got better. There was no standing on ceremony an "that's richt Tam, hae your usual" announced that one of the guests was having his usual second helping.

By this time, the bairns have had their "skoorie" of pennies and the usual bottle of whisky had been handed out and soon, with one accord, the tables were dismantled and the guests took places round the kitchen or "but." Then came the Grand March and there were two dances before the older men in the company discovered that the room was

getting uncomfortably warm and they went outside to get a smoke.

"What's a' your hurry for a smoke," says the wife of one. "Mrs Hamilton disna pit you oot afore ten o'clock. What's wrang wi' gicin' us a song afore you gann up the hill."

A compromise was arranged when Jimmy agreed to sing "Afton Water" and wi' Liza to sing "The Crookit Bawbee." When this was over they again made for the door. A slight halt was made when one of the men was advised, if they were gaun for a smoke, he'd better tak' his pipe that he left on the mantelpiece next door.

When they had gone, dancing was started in real earnest, generally Quadrilles and some of the popular country dances. Liquid refreshments were served at intervals and when the old men returned they were greeted with, "Has Mrs Hamilton turned you oot and is it tea you're efter?" They admitted to the second impeachment, but not the first, although they also admitted that, being lag Friday, they got landed amang a lot o' their cronies.

A very few of the dances satisfied the older women who then adjourned "ben" the room for a claver on the current village topics and hint at forthcoming weddings. Refreshments from a black bottle were introduced but very few indulge. Care had to be taken not to take one refusal as being definite for all night, as this might give offence on the grounds of "I ken I said no last time, but I dinna like tae be mislipped and aye like tae get the offer." About three o'clock in the morning the bride and bridegroom departed with cakes, etc., to take to old relations who could not be present but who expected to get the chance of wishing the happy couple all the best in their married life.

The company know that this was the last they would see of the couple and when they had gone there were quiet smiles all round at the prospect of the success of their tricks of putting holly leaves in their bed. The company gradually disappeared, leaving the courting couples a while to themselves atween the doors, or the older men haein' a last drink or deoch and doris, and shairing it with some of the miners making their way to the Lady Ann or the William Pits. The young men and women at the wedding would not go to their beds.

For a spell my thoughts lingered on the scene as the various guests made their way home. No street lighting guided their way on roads flattered by the name of street, a shaded window light of some house where someone was

dressing to go to work showing up a few of the many puddles or crudely-made "shuch" or gutter. There was a sudden quietness after the cheery "guid nichts" as they departed from the scene of merriment and in some quiet corner another romance was either being started, strengthened, or had brought the wedding "crys" or a wedding to some fixed date. Such warnings as "Mind, folk are in their beds" quietened the younger ones and the very youngest were generally asleep and were being carried home by the parents. The homeward march was always accompanied by a discreet quiet that was a credit to the village, following the rather boisterous but good-natured hilarity. There was no evidence of the visits to Mrs Hamilton or the effects of the "health to the song" a short time previous. At the scene of the festivities there was a last cup of tea for those who had to set to and clean up and restore the house and the next door one to their usual and the "forms" taken back to the Band Hall.

While recalling this scene I am reminded of a scene that took place at such a wedding when just before the party were "scaling," one of the guests, who had come from Lochee, said that there was something he thought he was in honour bound to say. When some of his friends in Lochee had got to learn he was going to a miners' wedding in Fife he was advised to prepare himself for the occasion which would certainly arise, and he produced from a coat pocket some sticking plaster and a bottle of linament which, he was told, he would find a use for. He would take back these articles and would have the pleasure of saying that they were not required.

CHAPTER XXI.

The Readin' Room Denner

SUCH was a Fordell wedding, one of the few social events of the village. The others were the annual Paraud, the Forresters' Picnic and Sports, the Sunday School Picnic during the summer months, and Fordell Ball and Reading Room "Denner" in the winter.

The last mentioned was a purely male affair and was eagerly looked forward to. Michael Johnstone was the chairman for many years and nearly everyone present took part in the programme. The big pies from Baker Wilson in Cross-gates were looked forward to with eager anticipation and "Tam," one of the young men who never was heard to whisper, was often said to be on a starvation diet for two days previous in order to be able to take full advantage of the "denner." However, he never carried out his boast of being able to eat a "hale" pie and start on another, and he just settled down to a thorough enjoyment of the proceedings. There was never a scarcity of singers and musical instruments and the oldest members, while they thoroughly enjoyed themselves, also gave entertainment to the others with the rendering of their old time favourite songs, the choruses of which were heard a long distance away. In the early morning pranks were played. As it was held generally on a "lag" Friday, with no work next day, the proceedings lasted well on in the morning and then the pranks were started. The bell on the colliery stables, taken from a battleship commanded by one of the early Lairds associated with the colliery, looked upon as the "toon clock," would ring out vigorously, but no one complained, not even the manager in Anson Hill.

One of the best stories about the village is associated with a Reading Room Denner and has gained a national reputation.

In Fordell village there was a Hearse Society with a Village Committee who acquired a hearse and it was maintained by small contributions by the members. In the event of a death in the village this machine came into service, thus considerably reducing the expenses at such a time. The

hearse was kept at the rear of the village "store." After a Reading Room "denner" one of the company had more than his share of the "barley bree" and his companions put him to sleep in the hearse. Others later thought it would be a good joke to take the Hearse doon the Aberdour brae for the distance of about a quarter of a mile and there they left him. The story goes that at six o'clock in the morning his companions had forgotten all about him and had gone home. He, however, was wakened by the Stables Bell and, crawling out, he was convinced that this was the Judgment Morning and, finding that he was all alone, he said, shaking his head, "Judgment Day an' I'm a' on ma ain. It's a damned puir turn-oot for Fordell."

CHAPTER XXII.

The Sunday school picnic; tired o' religion; and the menage

THE children of Fordell had always one good day of the year, namely the Sunday School Picnic. For six weeks previous to the picnic the children had to attend regularly to entitle them to a ticket and, during that time, there was no trouble in getting the attendance required.

Farmers in the district supplied corn "cairts" and at an early hour on the Saturday morning of the picnic they duly appeared with the horses, all dressed with ribbons, and the drivers decorated with rosettes. The children were all nicely dressed for the occasion at the expense of a sacrifice on the parts of the parents and, armed with a "tinny" each, they boarded these carts and the procession started for some place like Aberdour or some private estate three or four miles away. A melodeon player was always in the first cart and to the singing of hymn tunes, Sankey and Moodie, the procession made its way to the appointed place. Two meals were served on the grass, cakes and milk, and between the meals races and games amused the children.

This picnic was held by the Established Church at Mossgreen, though the Sunday School was held at Fordell, and all the children, with a very few exceptions, put in an appearance. The main difficulty was a question of suitable dress for the occasion, a question of expense. It was surprising, however, to see very often how the very poorest in the village managed to get there. Presents of suitable articles of clothing, a dress and shoes, mysteriously found their way to the poorer homes, quite a number by the colliery officials acting on instructions from the "big hoose." The question of the various religious denominations presented no difficulty as the only place of worship was the Church at Mossgreen with a mission meeting some time in the Auld Schule on Sunday nights. No other religious denominations functioned. The Rev. John Clark used to tell a story, against himself and the Church of Scotland, of how one of his flock left his church to join one of the newer forms of religion of the

Plymouth Brethern, who met at Cowdenbeath. He did not stay away very long, but returned to Mossgreen Church after a lapse of a few months. Mr Clark, anxious to know why he had come back to the fold, put the question to him and the reply was to the effect that he had left the Mossgreen Kirk to go to a religious place, but after a while he got tired of religion and he had to come back to the Auld Kirk, as the Church of Scotland was best known by him.

As I sit here viewing the rapid demolition of this unique village after many years of town life, both in Fife, Scotland and England, and the very busiest centre of American life, the uppermost thought in my mind was the happy contentment shown by the Fordell natives recalling the famous lines in Gray's *Elegy*—"Far from the crowds ignoble strive, their sober wishes never learned to stray."

Did they really enjoy this isolation from choice? After all, the town life was not so very far removed, so I am forced to the conviction that this was their ideal existence and they desired no other. Certainly the cinema was never even dreamed of but I had to come to the conclusion that even the cinema at Cowdenbeath and Dunfermline, far less the ice-hockey, would not have enticed them from their isolation. There were two reasons I had in mind. The first was the very small wages paid to the miners in these days and the other was their inborn desire for peace and quiet. Added to this, there was a natural feeling of inferiority complex, which, to some extent, limited their desire to mix with city life and the uncomfortable feeling of mixing with strangers when they would be outside their element. They had glimpses of that life when they spent their annual gala in some big town and they preferred to spend their life among their ain folk in their native village. I wondered how many of the total number in the village actually never spent a night out of their own home. Then how did they amuse themselves for the rest of the year apart from the few fete days in the village? Even at the New Year holiday time they had an attraction of their own. I wonder how many people have heard of the word "menage" and know its meaning. Well, Fordell had a Menage at the New Year time. It was conducted by a well-known man known as "Basty Reenie," no doubt the local pronunciation of Mr Sebastian Rennie. With his wife, they lived in a two-roomed house with a stone floor.

During the New Year week the kitchen, with its stone floor, was, as usual, spotlessly clean. The couple invested in

a large number of New Year Black Buns, shortbread, cakes, bottles of whisky and oranges. On a table in the middle of the floor were laid six-sided dice and a dice box. There they spent happy hours throwing dice, usually a penny a throw, and when twelve people invested a penny a piece they threw the dice until one with the highest number got a prize of a cake of shortbread, a currant bun or a dozen of oranges. For the whisky, valued at that time at half-a-crown, a larger number of entries had to be secured before the throwing started.

The younger generation were generally treated with sweets and the men often started the night with a free drink of whisky. On reflection after all these years, I am forced to the conclusion that, though strong drink was often referred to in a way that gave one the opinion that temperance was little known in the village, drunkenness was almost unknown. I cannot remember seeing drunk men and, even at the Menage, when drink was given free, the women folk were never molested but always held in great respect and treated as the *gentler* sex, though many could load a coal waggon from the ground with a number ten shovel as well as any man.

CHAPTER XXIII.

The evenin' danner wi' music

ONE popular way the young men and women spent their summer evenings was the evening "danner" on the country roads leading from the village, either on the road to Aberdour or down the mineral railway, a means of amusement that was both healthy and, at the same time, responsible to a large extent for that "neeborliness" which characterised the village life.

These evening outings took place in the longest days of the year. The pithead girls finished work about four o'clock but by the time that they were "cleaned up" and had helped with the household work the girls from the Dunfermline linen factories were home and had their tea and those who did housework had more than earned a time for rest and recreation. Shortly before seven o'clock, without any pre-arrangement, they would meet at different points, some at the Lovers' Loan, others at the end of Monteith Terrace, and with the arrival of the melodeon player, sometimes two, a start would be made for the Aberdour Road, the favourite walk, the melodeon player in front, with the rest made up generally of mostly girls in threes, arm in arm, who joined in with singing the tune selected. The young men joined in at different places or were at the usual halting place at the bottom of the hill near to a convenient gate to a field on the roadside. That gate was very necessary as it provided a seat for the musician. He had a very extensive repertoire, suitable for chorus work, when all would join in the favourites. Then he would strike up a waltz and dancing would commence. One can easily understand how the waltz was the favourite dance as the girls had either a hard ten hours work at the pithead or had to make a very early start to get to Dunfermline and the sentimental rhythm of the waltz was more in keeping with their physical condition and the still and quiet of the rural surroundings. Occasionally, there was one of the more lively dances, such as the polka, but these were favoured only by the youngest of the company. The selection of partners was a very simple matter for though there was a "lad and lass" element and there were favourite

partners there was never a question of any girl being left out. The melodeon players had a very extensive list of tunes suitable for the occasion and the words of the well-known waltz tunes provided the vocal part of the evening's entertainment. There was a similarity in the evening programmes on these occasions and the fading light and the order of the tunes was a certain indication of the time when the player got from his seat on the gate and the homeward march would commence.

All the young men and women of the village were not to be found there as a large number of the once habitual attenders were now absent and it is not difficult to explain why. One by one, or rather two by two, they answered the mating call and what could be more natural than that of the embrace of the waltz with the co-ordinating steps and entrancing expressions of love should determine who were best suited for each other. This was another example of the silent courtship that brought about the wedding bells, the ringing of the stable bell, and the flying of a flag on the bride's house and the pulley wheel platform when one or perhaps both were employed in that pit. They never forgot these impromptu meetings and often took part in the closing waltz as they made their way home from walks in the country.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Neebors a'

THE married people found their enjoyment in their gardens in the spring, summer and autumn, for it was only in the cold winter days that the Fordell gardens did not attract the attention of the gardeners. Then the oldest and youngest found house-to-house visitation a very pleasant way of passing the winter nights. It was very seldom a house door was locked and none boasted chub locks and when bed time came there was no anxiety about the whereabouts of missing members of a family for they could be found next door very unwilling to come home and go to bed after of course the nightly hands and face washing, especially the hands. On the other hand the children returning home knew that their parents could also be found next door for a "blether," especially the mother, who could always find many excuses of going next door if any excuse was required.

It will have been made apparent that this "neeborliness" was a prominent feature of the village and although it was practiced in other Scottish mining villages it was never to the same extent as make it a characteristic feature as it was in Fordell.

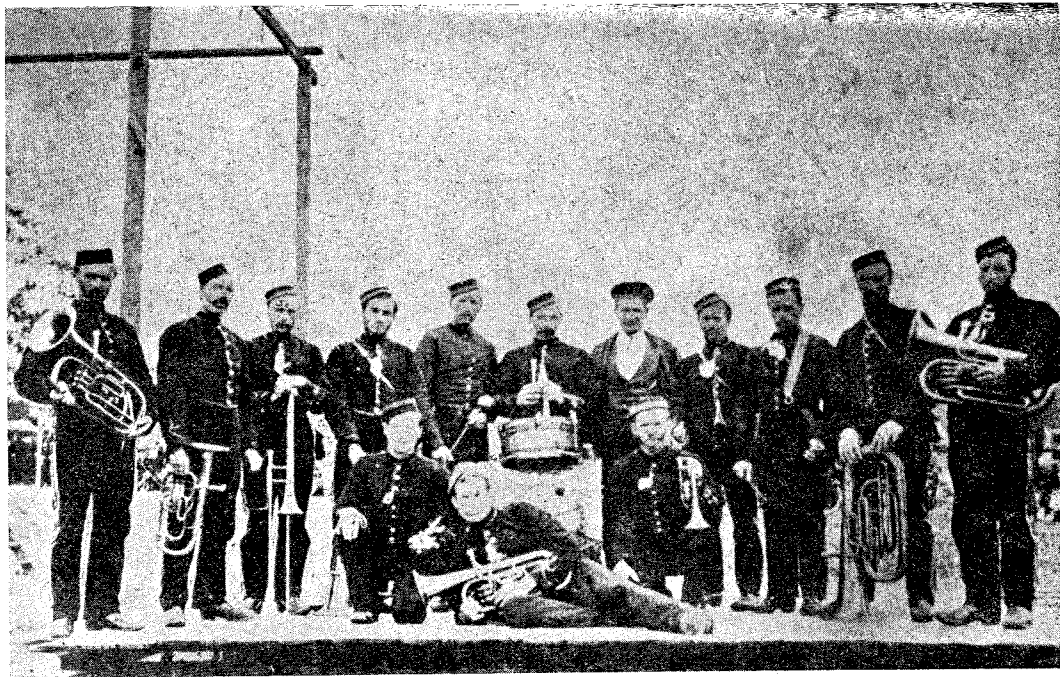
There is a well-known Scottish saying, "We're a' John Tamson's Bairns," which does not need any explanation, but that saying would have been refuted literally if applied to Fordell last century, for while the sentiment was very appropriate, Fordell natives never accepted John Tamson as a native of the village, as they always associated him and his descendants with Crossgates. The same may be said of Geordie Penman, for years Provost of Cowdenbeath. Although he was one of the branch of the family who went to reside at Cowdenbeath and some who went to Kelty, generally because of the number who took a prominent part in the development of the mining industry, starting with Auld Willie Penman, father of Provost Penman, who helped to develop the industry in West Fife along with his many sons. Then Geordie played a cornet in Crossgates Brass Band which was, to Fordell folk, inexcusable. They were the prodigal sons of the village. Even with the Beveridges

one member of the family left many years ago. She was Granny Beveridge who, after a very adventurous life with her husband and family in different West Fife villages, eventually settled down at Cowdenbeath, where she passed away a few years ago, over ninety years of age. She had always a warm side for Fordell and used to relate to me of how at one time her mother was employed underground in Bulwark Pit and how she was actually born down the pit. When an infant she was taken down the pit and was put to sleep in some convenient "waste" not far away, near where her mother was employed.

In these days there were stair pits in Fordell, the women carrying the coal up the shaft in creels by a series of stairways with suitable landings. Thus it will be seen that the exception was the family who did not have a life-long family connection with the village, and it extended to several generations. The closing down of the village recently, in one instance, ended the residence of five generations in the village, but there were instances of where members of the fifth generations were still employed in Fordell Colliery.

This, to a large extent, explains the "neeborliness" in the village as, while it is a common belief that relations "'greed better apairt," that did not apply to Fordell. Sometimes one heard the expression "I 'clare to my guidness ane canna ca' his hoose his ain," but that was how the Fordell folk wanted it and no other way.

This intermingling of the domestic relations of the different families maintained a camaraderie best understood with the word "neeborliness" that brought about so many blessings. It brought about a broad and deep sympathy with each other that tended to the general welfare of the village. As has been shown, it was evident in time of rejoicing, such as a wedding and, in a lesser degree, a birth, but it was more beautifully revealed at times of misfortune when all the best traits in human nature came to the front, not with a show of generosity, but with a modesty that was a part of their existence. Their only recompense or award, though that latter word was never contemplated, was the knowledge that in their time of trouble and affliction the same kindly, practical sympathy would be extended to them. Residents in the largest towns will find it very difficult to realise the full truth of this Fordell "neeborliness" as, in many instances, a family in a large tenement house always remained strangers to many families in the same building. A well-known West Fife man closely associated with Fordell tells



Fordell Brass Band — taken at Lassodie Games — in the last century



Harry Lauder and his wife



*John Smart and his wife
on the occasion of their golden wedding*



Mr and Mrs John Bennet Smart

of an incident in New York of how he was once in the happy position of being able to allow a man to fulfil a very important appointment by giving him the small sum of five cents, the relative value in the country at the time of a subway fare of a penny, because he had inadvertently left his home with no money. The American could not understand how anyone would give him the money with no possibility of repayment and it was only after travelling together for over ten miles in the Subway that the Fifer was able to convince him that the enjoyment and pleasure he received out of doing another man a good turn compensated him far and above the monetary value of the gift. I tell this story at this stage to explain how, in many instances, in Fordell many such gifts were made and all the more appreciated because they were opportune and genuine because they were anonymous.

As I sit here, in the days of National Assistance, compensation, unemployment grants, old age pensions, and the various sources of assistance to the ageing people, "free" education, "free" books and bursaries, and recall the very small wages of miners, no holidays with pay, no compensation for going down the pit many days to find there was no work because of such things as falls from the roof or the common "no waggons," I marvel how the miners and their families managed to exist. There were always many holes in a miner's belt and many mornings he had to pull his belt another hole before he went to his work in order that his family or the family next door may get some sort of breakfast.

I make no excuse for this digression as it explains in the most thorough way that kindly feeling and I must repeat the word "neeborliness" that existed in Fordell over sixty years ago and for many years before and after.

There were no grants for special expenses at a birth but the little "strangers" were always provided for in the way of clothing. The many benefits of the modern maternity hospitals of to-day must make one wonder at how in a village of houses of not more than a "but and ben," and with families that averaged six, that arrangements for a birth were made possible, but the fact remains that these things took place and the only explanation is that the immediate neighbours rose to the occasion. The mother had a room to herself and the husband and children were catered for with food and sleeping accommodation while family washing for the "neebors" was larger than usual and more often. "Just

the thing the doctor ordered " in the way of special diets, such as eggs, and in some cases, wines, seemed to come from nowhere and no one made inquiries as to whom the donors were. Verbal thanks and appreciation were never given or wanted.

Even the youngest children did their part in the way of helping by not expecting so much of the attention bestowed on them in normal times and they willingly ran the extra messages when their only reward was a look at their little sister or brother or, better still, the baby who had arrived next door.

The occasion of a birth was, after all, an event for which preparation in a general way could be made, but sickness or accident was an entirely different matter. In a mining village the latter came upon them without warning, though being an entirely mining village, there was always that feared but unspoken dread that an accident underground would take place, that all the care in roof support did not prevent a "fall" because of a "greasy lipe" or some part of the haulage would get put out of order.

CHAPTER XXV.

The toll of the pits

FATAL accidents in Fordell were exceptionally few, however. Tombstones in Mossgreen Churchyard tell of the victims of the explosion in the William Pit in the seventies when the "gigsman," Mr Arnott, and pithead girls were killed. In that case a boiler burst and the tragedy shocked the Fife coalfield. A somewhat similar accident took place at St. David's when a colliery engine boiler exploded and two men were killed. At the beginning of the century two men were killed underground, one the manager, Mr Morton, and the other the Inspector of the Day Level, Mr Pollock, both shank accidents, but up to within recent years a fatality at the face was practically unheard of. Coal had been worked on the Fordell Estate since the latter part of the 13th century and Fordell village came into existence about 1800, but all the time that coal was worked on the estate there never had been anything in the shape of a serious mining accident. This immunity can be attributed to the fact that boys who entered the mines got very careful instructions from their parents. A boy was placed under the care of his father, who apprenticed him in the art of coal extraction and, above all, "safety first," especially roof control.

In these days the coal was always hand picked; it was long before the days of Horizon Mining, coal cutting machines, belt conveyors and mechanical transport. The lads took the coal in hutches to a point from which ponies were used to convey the coal to the pit bottom. At the same time the coal was taken from the best of the top seams and gas and black damp was practically unknown. Safety lamps were not required and thus the cause of most of the country's mining disasters was absent. This was so until the working of the Alice Pit, the latest pit to be sunk in 1880, but was not operated until 1897, when mechanism was introduced, but very fortunately gas, and its fatal companion "black damp," have been absent. This state of affairs has proved a great blessing to the Fordell miners and there has been no call for the display of heroism which has been evident

when a mining tragedy has taken place in other parts of the British coalfield.

On a few occasions, the coal has gone on fire by friction in such seams as the Lochgelly Splint and there was never any scarcity of volunteers for fire fighters, and the heroism of the Fordell miners was never in doubt if ever there had been the risking of life to save the lives of their fellow workers.

CHAPTER XXVI.

My brothers keeper

IN a mining community there has always been the individual accident, such as injuries to limb, which necessitated a miner being laid off work for a time and here we had the finest traits of the Fordell miners brought to the surface.

In the days before the Miners' Compensation Act an injured miner's home was bereft of income and where there was only one wage earner in the home one can fully understand what the position of affairs was. Here the miners came to the rescue. This was responsible for the "drawings" at the colliery office on pay days. Two men with a pass book stood at the office and collected small donations from the workers on getting their pay and donations were given by all, small as they sometimes were, but which most could ill afford. This was also carried out in the case of illness and there was scarcely a pay day but there was a "drawing" for some unfortunate family.

As I sit here in the brilliant sunshine and, looking over the village to the pleasant scene to the south, with the Forth Bridge in the background, with beautifully-wooded scenes in the foreground making in all a picture to be remembered, I wonder how many people in the present generation, having successfully secured their share of the good things in life, fully realise how different were the conditions sixty years ago and how much worse they were for hundreds of years before that in that wonderful village lying at my feet. Reviewing the lives of the natives is much simplified in the fact that all the people to be dealt with were of the mining fraternity.

Over sixty years ago, when I first made contact with them, every house in the village belonged to the Fordell Coal Company, always privately owned. Pits had been sunk, worked out and abandoned, and the ones in existence then were the William Pit, formerly called the Wellington, the George, and the Lady Anne. The George, which was closed down nearly sixty years ago, was the only means of supply-

ing the home market, with the exception of a small amount in land sale from the Lady Anne, supplied to the countryside in carts, the George being the only pit with a connection with the national railways.

A friend of my youth, Tom Paton, one of the very few boys from Cowdenbeath employed in the George Pit before it closed down, explained to me recently that he got work there because the pit was actually nearer Cowdenbeath than Fordell. He was employed with a few others in the only seam in operation in the pit and they could never be sure of a day's work. In the morning they used to sit at the pit-head and watch for a train of empty waggons that passed daily on the main railway. If the train did not stop it meant that there were no orders for coal and the men were idle for that day. Back they would come next day always with the optimism that the train would stop.

A private harbour, St. David's, was constructed in 1854, which could take vessels of between 500 and 600 tons, and was connected with a private railway laid down in the second half of the 18th century. It was a very primitive railway indeed, as, while the waggon wheels were of iron, the waggon rails were of wood. The waggons, very small, carrying a little over two tons, are still in use today, but on iron rails.

I mention these details to explain the conditions which had a very big effect on the lives of the Fordell miners. Practically all the coal of the colliery was exported from St. David's for ports in Britain and the continent. A large amount was carried to the Baltic ports and the fact that the Baltic was closed by ice for three months in the year had a big influence on the colliery export trade and naturally it affected the lives of the miners. Coal was very plentiful in these days, with the result that competition for the foreign market was very keen. Coal had to be sold at a very low figure to get the market and the miners were the biggest sufferers. The "face" miners were paid by results, namely, at so much a ton of twenty-two cwts. after it had reached the pithead. Unlike the coal sold today it had to be "clean" coal and the miner had from his reduced earnings to pay the wages of his "drawer" and "filler." My earliest recollections were that the miner earned about 3/- to 3/6 per day, not for an eight hours day, which was introduced later, but to get as much money as possible in the form of wages many a miner was always anxious to get "anither tither yin," meaning another hutch of coal to give anything like a living wage. Gradually the earnings of the miners got

bigger and sixty years ago a couplet gave an indication of the miners' ideal:

*Eight hours to work
Eight hours to play
Eight hours to sleep
And eight "bob" a day.*

For a long number of years that was only a dream, an aspiration. A national basic wage was fixed in 1888 and figured prominently until a few years ago. During that time all increases were calculated on percentages on the old rate of payment. That was a constant grievance, namely the fixing of an increase on so much per cent. on basic rate of many years before. Eventually that was altered and an increase of say six per cent. was calculated on the then rate of wages. However, the basic wage was not the factor that determined the miners' remuneration. It was the question of the loss of work caused by the pits being thrown idle from several reasons, through no fault of the miners, when they were not paid anything. At Fordell this was a very serious matter which, in recent years, has entirely disappeared.

Nearly all the coal produced, as I stated before, for reasons mentioned, was for the foreign market and exported through St. David's. The closing of the Baltic ports had a big say in this and during that time of the year the export trade was much reduced and there was a keener competition for the home market and the other European markets and sometimes the difference of a farthing to a penny a ton meant all the difference of getting a big order or not and whether or not the pits were to be thrown idle. The proprietors did their best to keep the pits going, but the limited rolling stock in the form of waggons and the limited siding accommodation, owned by Fordell Colliery, meant more idle time and loss of wages for the miners. When the waggons were full and there were no orders, the pits were thrown idle. This was a serious matter for the miner as no work, no pay, was the order of the day.

The proprietors, anxious to relieve the situation to some extent, commenced laying down a reserve supply of coal, known as a "bing," at the Lady Anne, but that was another expense to be added to the working costs as, when business improved, "filling off the bing" into the waggons, by means of a steam hoist, had to be carried out. The rate of pay for this work was very low but the miners were glad to accept it, and a number were anxious to work extra hours at the "bing" to eke out the family income, much reduced by the

many idle days. There were anxious inquiries at St. David's as to the boats that were expected or were on their way, and the miners waited with anxiety for news of empty wag-gons coming for the harbour. Meanwhile the "off takes" such as rent, household coal and doctor's fees, had to be met so that, in many instances, the pay lines every fortnight were very much reduced and a common expression was that the balance was not worth the wasting of shoe leather to draw.

CHAPTER XXVII.

John Tamson's bairns

HERE was where the "cameraderie" and the brotherly atmosphere of Fordell village played its part. Food was the first necessity. Potatoes were the main source of diet and luckily they were a very cheap commodity. "Tatties and dab at the stool" was very common. The potatoes, very often from a stock stored from a miner's garden and given free, were boiled and served all round the family who "dabbed" them into a dish of salt in the centre of the table or on a stool in the middle of the floor. At certain times of the year a herring "cadger" came from Inverkeithing and got a good sale for his stock at three a penny. Occasionally a miner killed a pig he reared and the pork distributed at never more than sixpence a pound and very often much less, even for nothing. Flour and meal provided scones and porridge and milk was always a cheap commodity. Bootware seldom provided a difficulty for the children, during the summer, ran about bare-footed and the repairing of the men's and women's boots was solved by quite a number of the miners who had become expert in this work by practice. The cost of the leather was the only expense. A barber's services were dispensed with as every miner shaved himself and the sight of a miner or two who had become proficient, through practice, in cutting the hair of his many clients sitting at a back door of one of the rows, was a common one. Outside the village there was a common saying that the customers got a "bowl" clip when kitchen bowls were placed on the head and the barber cut round the bowl. I never came across any vindication of such a rumour and the miners themselves decided that idea was so ridiculous that they never troubled to deny it.

There were very strange ways of eking the family income which often became a village contribution and to one I refer. On the shores of Fife, near St. David's, were a very large number of whelks, known locally as "wilks." The women of Fordell used to go down there at certain seasons of the year, especially at a spell of "idle days," and collect them in pails and sell them to the "herring cadger" at Inverkeith-

ing at half-a-crown a bushel for export to London. The children of Fordell used to like them, too, when boiled and they were a "special" in their plain diet. The villagers never went in for what they used to call new fangled dishes, though often quite common in other places. Jenny Henderson could never be coaxed to eat lettuce, her reason being that she "wisna a coo."

The saying "The poor we have always with us" could be applied always to Fordell in the early years. Illness was a common cause of it, especially when the one affected was the bread-winner. There was no income of any kind to the house. The village is in the parish of Dalgetty and the headquarters of the Parish Council was at Aberdour. True, they administered parochial relief, but the weekly amounts in relief were so small and the travelling so much a difficulty in bad weather, even for healthy people, that applications, I heard, were never made. At the same time, the fact of a family being on the Parish Council relief, and very often the offer of the much-dreaded poorhouse, was so repugnant to Fordell people that it prevented applications. The people of Fordell had a better way of looking after their invalids or aged poor. The word "pauper" was not in their language. It was certainly in their minds on occasion but it was never even whispered. They did good by stealth, but never had cause to blush to find it fame, for it never became known. Here again Mr Currie of Mossgreen School played a silent, but active, part and he saw that the children never lagged in their education for the want of school books. Even when parents were able to afford the price of books he was sure that they were not abused and when a member of a family passed a class in the school with no younger sisters or brothers to get the benefit of the books he saw to it that the books were not allowed to lie unused.

The widows of the village also introduced a problem in the days long before the advent of the widows' pension. This was where the wee sweetie shop came in. The colliery owners in such cases allowed a widow to use one room in her house as a "sweetie shop," with a small counter and a window for the display of her goods. Here was sold sweeties, rock, the smallest of the kitchen and household articles, such as a packet of pins, thread, penny bottles of vinegar, penny packets of note paper. Once a week she made "potted heid" which she sold for a few pence per bowl, and often a large mangle was provided so that her customers and neighbours could get their washing mangled at so much

a bundle. The young men of the village and the pithead girls used to call and perform the hardest of the mangling and thus the old woman secured a livelihood and maintained her independence. Thus the village dealt with and solved their own troubles with a modesty and a satisfaction of which they had every cause to be proud. I have referred to their desire to remain a complete and independent community and one can now understand one reason for this and it was a commendable one.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

The Lowdeners

THERE was one time when an unconscious attempt was made to interrupt this one family atmosphere. It was in 1866, when three families of miners invaded the village from the Lothians to find work in the Fordell Colliery. They were promised work by the management, against the wishes and inclinations of the entire village.

Necessity may be the mother of invention, but in this case it determined that the families, in each case a father and mother with three sons miners, and daughters, too, of working age, and children of school age, numbering in all twenty-four, had to take up residence and work there.

They were given work in both the Lady Ann and the William pits but they were far from being accepted. All three heads of families had dealings with the Lothian Branch of the Miners' Union but that did not simplify matters. Fordell miners and the inhabitants looked upon incomers as undesirables, "Loudeners" or "Wast County Irishmen." The latter referred to Irishmen in the mines in the west of Scotland and some had got the length of West Fife but none had come to Fordell. The Loudeners were the first to get behind what now would have been called an "iron curtain."

The three families were "tolerated" for a very few years. One went to Cowdenbeath and another went there also by means of Hill-of-Beath to the collieries of the Cowdenbeath Coal Company and The Fife Coal Company. The third family, after a short while in a railway engineering works at Edinburgh, returned to Crossgates. The only effect that they had on the village life was that a son in the third family was later married to a Fordell young lady but did not take up residence in Fordell, but in Mossgreen. He later became a leading official in the Fife Miners' Union. Thus that "invasion" was defeated.

With the opening of the Alice Pit in recent years and with it more important development, gradually the miners employed there increased and they found that it was more convenient to reside at Cowdenbeath, and whole families removed there. That included the Japps, McArthurs, Muirs,

and Beveridges. The village instinct was retained and even survived the closing down of the Lady Anne. By that time the Fordell Brass Band had been disbanded, the Paraud a thing of the past, and the Flooer Show discontinued. With the introduction of the nationalisation of the coal industry came the death knell to Fordell. The old miners' rows were condemned as insanitary and not worth bringing up to modern conditions. St. David's harbour was closed and all the trade was done through the railway which passed the Alice Pit, their chief asset being the coal from the Fordell Splint which had earned a great reputation for its high quality. Today, only a few County Council houses are inhabited, while close by stands the ruins of what was for a hundred years a unique village, the only one of its kind in Scotland or Britain.

For sanitary reasons and on hygienic grounds a large number look, with satisfaction, on the departure of Fordell as vast housing schemes, with all modern conveniences, spring up within a few miles, providing all home comforts as baths, bedrooms, hot and cold water, lavatories and coal bunkers, all inside, not the least being wooden floors, but forgive me if I think of that "neeborliness" and that family spirit shown not only in times of rejoicing but equally brought out in the bearing of one another's troubles and burdens.

As I have been looking on the ruins of the village I have relived the many familiar scenes with ghost characters and I come to the conclusion that while on the one hand the miners of Fordell today are enjoying the many benefits of advancing civilisation long overdue, there is something that has not been carried forward with these improvements in social conditions and which has been lost for ever. I slowly arise from my vantage point to spend a time looking over the tombstones in Mossgreen Churchyard and as I read the names, growing indistinct with age, my thoughts go back again to Gray's Elegy.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Mr Currie and family

I RETURN, however, and as I sit here, picturing our school days of over sixty years ago, I realise the benefits of contentment, especially when I recall a poem in which the author proves that it would not be to our peace of mind if we were able to predict what the future held in store for us. He expresses thus in the following lines:

*The lamb thy riots dooms to bleed today,
Had he our reason would he skip and play?
Pleased to the last he crops his flowery food
And licks the hand that raised to shed his blood.*

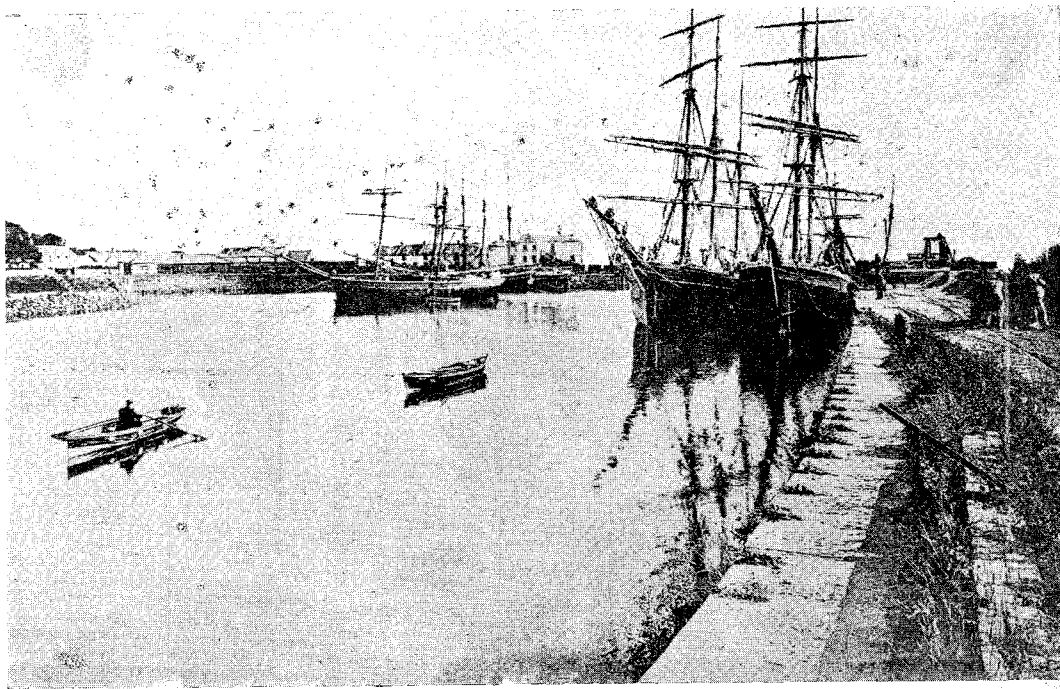
With this thought in my mind, I recall how we enjoyed the very simple things life had for us, perhaps more so than the school boys of today with all the modern means of amusement and to those more serious minded the extra means of education. I picture clearly the boys and girls proceeding to Mossgreen School by way of that beautiful, though short walk, through the Bulwark and the carefree attitude with which we entered the classrooms of the Currie family, Mr Currie, or his son James, or his daughter, because of the great interest they took in us educationally and socially. If they were strict, especially Mr Currie, it was in one direction, namely, cleanliness. No matter how poorly any one of the pupils was dressed he or she must have clean hands and each one had to take great care of their school books. They impressed on all of us that our parents had to pay for the school books, very often at the expense of household necessities, that they themselves did without.

In the same school were boys and girls from Crossgates, including Springhill, and while in school we all enjoyed a certain companionship that ceased when the school was dismissed at four o'clock and the Fordell pupils went east, and the others went west. Our opinions of the "enemy" were mostly vocal, unless we were outside the vigilance of Mr Currie, but the Fordell spirit, born and bred in the Fordell Watties of younger growth, was deeply embedded. There was one matter, shared by our parents, mostly all

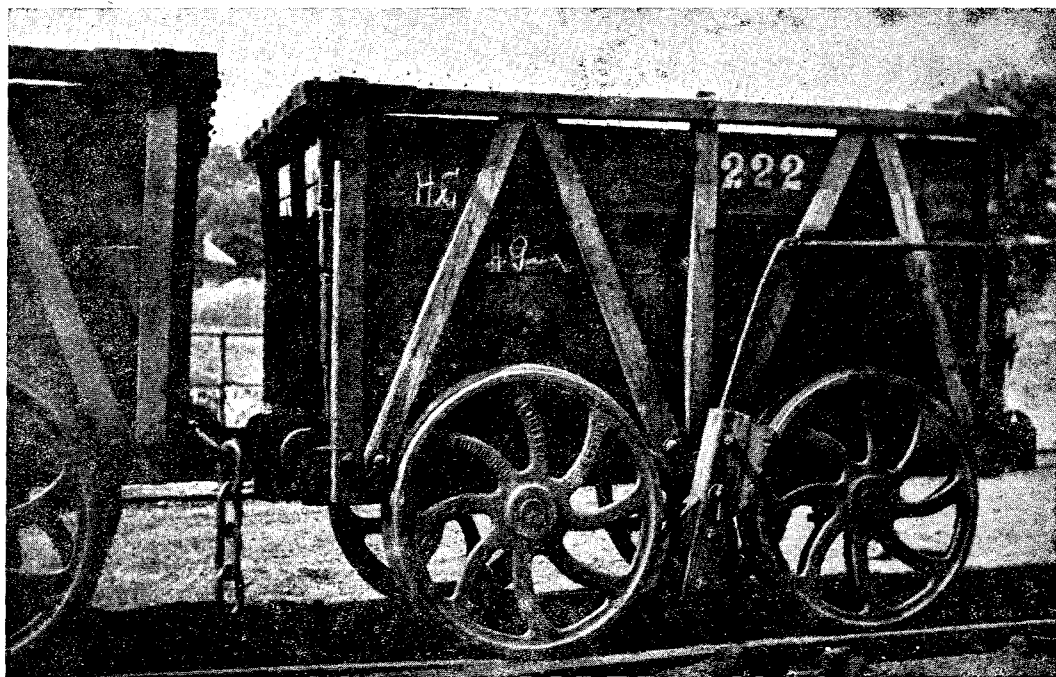
former pupils, in which we were not divided, and that was the high respect and almost loving regard for Mr Currie and his family. Mr Currie had one aim in life and that was to give his pupils all the education he could possibly instil. In this, he got the sympathy and assistance of the Henderson family who, besides providing prizes to induce the pupils to give of their best, presented special tit-bits in a general way. Mr Currie had also a way of his own to encourage the best from us—by the gifts of a penny each to pupils whom he described as a credit to his class. This specially referred to the visits of H.M. Inspectors. I remember one particular day when Mr Smith, the Inspector, examined the class his first question was in connection with the Battle of Quebec. I happened to be the first he asked and, very fortunately, the night before I happened to read a book dealing with this, and being interested in this battle and General Wolfe, I recited this to the extent of over a hundred words. The Inspector was so pleased that he said he would ask no more. After his departure, Mr Currie questioned the rest of the class on what they knew about the battle and, alas! they knew very little. That was made the occasion of two pence that day as “I had saved the honour and reputation of the class.” That night I was a hero and I did not go home by the Bulwark but by College Brae, in the company of two of the girls of the class, Mary Hamilton of the College, and Aggie Japp of Coles Terrace, who selected me for special attention to the annoyance of the other boys. On another occasion, I recited the whole of the 12th Chapter of Ecclesiastics and I got another honourable mention, along with the usual financial consideration. Once again I was selected for special favours from my girl friends when I again took the long way home. I felt highly honoured at the special attentions on the way and, as I had repeated the whole chapter, I felt I was quite entitled to all the good things said about me. One mistake I did make, however, and it was that in the recital of the various verses about the wheel broken at the cistern and the dust returning to the earth as it was, and the spirit returning to the Lord who giveth it, I failed to realise that that recital of the verses was less important than the understanding of them. Several years later I was in church when the minister made that particular chapter his lesson for the day. I remember him starting with the well-known words “Remember thy creator in the days of thy youth” and inaudibly I went over the chapter with him. Then the great truth struck me and the meaning of the words

dawned upon me for the first time. Then came the greatest shock, when he came to the words "Vanity of vanity, saith the preacher, all is vanity." In my spirit of boastfulness, I must have read that chapter many times and had not understood what the words meant and the words "Vanity of Vanities," now fully understood, showed me for the first time how blindly vain I had been. My thoughts went back to Mr Currie, who had passed away a few years previously, and I never have had the opportunity of explaining my shortcomings to the girl friends of my youth, but I hope that my blushes will be spared if I meet them by them having forgotten the incident.

Mr Currie's interest in his pupils was not only during school hours but was often expressed in private talks with our parents, all with the one idea, namely, the advancement of our education and it was always a source of great regret when a bright pupil had to leave school after passing the fifth standard to go to work to eke out the family income. He regretted the absence of the continuation classes and did his best to encourage pupils after leaving school to continue studies. I will always remember how one night, in a coal house, with the light of a candle, he expounded the *Pons Asinorum* of Euclid. The blackboard was a large "gathering coal" and I will never forget how he went over the problem until, as he said, "all the asses had crossed the bridge."



Picture of St David's Harbour from an old photograph



One of the original Fordell waggons, used in connection with the private railway at St David's, still in use

CHAPTER XXX.

Boys will be boys

OCCASIONALLY, when confronted with juvenile delinquency of more recent years and, as well, the many benefits of more recent times almost showered on the boys and girls in the way of children's treats, organised games, and outings, I cast my mind back to recall how we behaved as boys.

Firstly, I wish to state that our behaviour could very well be summed up in the common expression of excuse for boys, namely, "boys will be boys," and that covers a great deal. We did not lament the absence of the Cinema in the village for a very good reason and for the same reason there was no cycling and so we had to make our own amusements in games that did not cost anything. Rounders, leap-frog, and the usual boisterous games were indulged in. Football was beginning to have a hold in the county and various attempts were made to form a village club by the boys themselves. The procedure was the same in each instance, namely, a collection book went round the doors, and we were very lucky to get as much in that way as buy a ball in the vicinity of three shillings, all in penny donations. The "Committee" took the money to the manager of the "Store" who secured the ball. The team was formed with plenty aspirants for any vacancies and we played friendly games with other schools in the district. The name of the team was "Fordell Heatherbell" and our big day was when we walked to Dunfermline to play a team there in the morning, the team carrying a "piece" each so that we would be in a position and a condition to crawl under the fence or over it to see the Dunfermline Athletic game in the afternoon. These Dunfermline games always coincided with the Athletic, our heroes, home games, and the same care was taken for home games with the Cowdenbeath team. One of our players, John Ford, and mind you he stayed at Springhill, outside the limits of Fordell, eventually played for Dunfermline Athletic. This must have been before the days of transfer for we took him from the Crossgates team. I remember in the early days the position of goalkeeper was not popular,

for then it was quite legitimate for one opposing player to charge the 'keeper while another scored. I have vivid recollections of this because I was usually the goalkeeper. As I said, we had various teams, for the club usually came to an end when the ball was past repair and, after a time of idleness, we started the whole proceedings over again to get the necessary ball. Goal nets were not used. As a matter of fact, we had no goal-posts and there were often hot arguments about whether or not the ball was too high for the 'keeper to possibly save before the goal was allowed. Sometimes we had great difficulty in getting a team to travel, as often a player had first of all to run the Saturday messages before he was allowed to travel with his team, after a deputation had prevailed upon a mother, who thought that the messages came before football. Once there was a question of whether or not we could leave to play at Dunfermline or Cowdenbeath from a moral point of view, as the fear was expressed that we would be soon as bad as the boys were in these "toons."

However, there was never any danger of that calamity falling on Fordell. The boys were just boys with all boyish tricks and pranks but I cannot remember any occasion when the local police-man had to be brought in to attend to any misdemeanour. Perhaps the reason for this was that, as all the boys in the village were miners' sons, the colliery manager saw to their good behaviour. I remember once some of the boys, including myself, set fire to some dried grass in the vicinity of the workshops, with no seeming danger to any property, but next day after school we were taken to the colliery office by our respective mothers and there we received a dressing-down by the manager. We never returned there again. Occasionally the policeman from Springhill came to the village, but it was only to get his book signed to prove that he had been there at a certain time.

There may have been cases from Fordell at the Dunfermline Sheriff Court but I cannot remember even one. To us boys the policeman was a reminder that "crime did not pay" and someone who had to be avoided in an official capacity. For a long time the policeman was Mr McInnes, and I will always remember an experience with him of which he was unaware. My brother and I were returning home from Crossgates through the Bulwark Wood when I spied a "cushie doo's" nest at the top of a tall fir tree. I was dared to go up and that dare was not to be scorned to maintain my prestige and so up that tree I went. I had just

informed my brother, younger than I was, that there was one egg in the nest when he called out to me that "the 'bobby' is coming," and then made off. I started to descend, but I soon realised that I had not the time to do so and escape, so back I went up the tree to the very top. It would not be for long, I thought, for I knew that he had not seen me. Along he came when, to my dismay and horror, instead of proceeding to the village, he stopped at the bottom of the tree and, sitting down on a stone, drew out his pipe and commenced to smoke. The top of the tree was very slender and swung and creaked with my weight. For about a quarter of an hour, it seemed like two hours, he quietly enjoyed that smoke and then walked away to the village and I followed, shaking all over, but very thankful for that escape.

I had another exciting experience at that place. In the Bulwark Wood there was a pond of stagnant water that nobody knew the depth of. One winter afternoon, when this pond was frozen over, we boys dared each other to see if the ice was bearing. I risked too much and proved that it was not bearing for I disappeared below in the dirty water. I did not remember very much beyond hearing noises in my ears like Fordell Band playing the "Floors o' Edinburgh." I woke up in bed. No doctor was sent for but I had to swallow a large cup of salts to clear my stomach of the dirty water. The relief that I was not drowned saved me from further parental punishment. Later I heard a recital of the details of the rescue, of how a man passing by just managed to get hold of my hair and pulled me out, and of how I was carried home on a shutter from Anson Hill. I missed that sight but one older boy said that I looked "a bonnie corpse." I did not miss the next incident in the Bulwark when Jimmy Lyon, from the Lang Raw, fell down from a tree and fractured one of his arms. I was one of the stretcher party that got the same shutter and carried him home.

CHAPTER XXXI.

A tough breed

THE Fordell "Watties" must have been a tough breed. They had practically nothing in the way of special home comforts, as compared with the miners' houses of to-day. A wooden tub in the middle of the kitchen floor was the equivalent of the splendidly equipped pithead baths of to-day and only a few houses had wooden floors, the exceptions to the fireclay brick floors.

Many an old Fordell miner used to say that stone floors were handy in one way. When he let his pipe fall on the floor, only clay pipes were used, he "needna bother pickin' it up," and the "auld wife" said that applied to crockery also, but it was a blessing that cups and saucers were cheap and clay pipes were six a penny. The companion blessing to the modern pithead bath is the arrangement for the drying of the miners wet clothes at the pithead. Not only did the earlier miners have to walk home in all weathers in their wet clothes, but the drying of them occupied all the attention of the miners' wives in the evenings and all the available space in front of the fire. There were no complaints about a service of hot water for they had not cold water laid in. That supply came from the cast-iron wells outside, one for each miner's row. The water was kept in pails in a recess between the back door and inside door of the kitchen. These were covered to keep out the dust and the domestic cat in search of a drink.

There were only open fire grates which limited the fare to soups, potatoes, stews and boiling beef and anything that only required frying. A necessary article of furniture was the washing pot to boil the water for washing day and, in the case of a very large family, to make as much "kail" and potatoes as supply the needs. When all the members of the family were in good health the sleeping accommodation was often a worry, but if anyone was ill, it was a problem and shake-downs had to be resorted to. Little assistance could be given by the next door neighbour, eager as they all were to help, but despite all these drawbacks, the village was wonderfully healthy.

No district nurse visited the village but the midwife was a constant visitor. Then some of the youngest members of the family had to "bide" a day or two with their relations who could squeeze them in.

There was never anything in the way of an epidemic which was something that they were thankful for. If there had been, no blame could be attached to the drains for, as far as I ever knew, there were none. I never remembered ever seeing a fever van in the village and the ambulance waggon in mining districts was unknown. Fortunately there were no serious accidents in the Fordell pits and the colliery stretcher proved suitable for all cases. There were, of course, always the colds, bronchitis, etc., and a few had influenza when it was fashionable as a new disease. Still there were cases of illness and old people had eventually to be set aside for attention.

Miners, as a general rule, never lived to what was generally called a ripe old age and a miner constantly employed in the coal mines was an old man at sixty years, whereas today many miners are still employed underground over seventy years of age and they walk erect. The old miners used to be easily recognised by their bent backs, more so the taller men, as a result of low working places. Fordell old miners were an exception to this rule and quite a few lived to pass the allotted span. There were two reasons for this. One was that the Fordell miners did not have the long stretches of continuous work for the reasons I gave previously and miners had time to spend in their gardens for which the village was famous.

It was indeed a healthy exercise and recreation only available in good weather with good air to breathe, and the sky as the "roof." Then the colliery management was very good to the old miners in finding work for them on the surface, such as the maintenance of the colliery railways or odd jobs at the pitheads or colliery workshops. Such work was known among the miners as "abine" ground and a story is told of how an old miner went to a pithead foreman and asked for a "job abine wark." The reply was, "I hope you get it 'luddie' for I've been lookin' for a job like that nearly a' ma life." I told this story to an English friend without success until I told him that "abine" was the Scottish word for above.

CHAPTER XXXII.

Under the surface

IN recent years I have been closely connected with old folks treat committees, organised about 1910, first of all for a social gathering and then for outings in the summer. Other bodies took up the matter, until now the ageing population, especially those of seventy years, are entertained in several ways. Old age pensions have reached and now have passed the thirty shillings a week mark. This sometimes makes me wonder if the unarranged method adopted by the village for the care of their old folk had not a beautiful point in it, lost in the present scheme of things in the care of the old folks. The retirement pensions gives a certain amount of independence, but oh, how the old folk hate the words National Assistance on their pension books and the words Home and Hospital does not take away the feeling that they are dependent on charity. There is no doubt whatever that the old folk get many more comforts today than the village of Fordell could bestow on their veterans, but their independence was preserved with the absence of officialdom with its charity lists and public manifestations.

In Fordell there was that united, happy family feeling that meant so much to the old folk as they were made to feel that all the benefactions came from the sons and daughters of that large, united family. I cannot help from feeling that with the increased national and local attention to the old folk for their general welfare that it would be such a blessing and relief to the old folk if the Fordell spirit found a place. One old lady friend of mine is always very perturbed at the National Assistance on her pension book and it is always a question of her needs versus her pride and dignity as to whether she refuse to answer the same old questions that are asked at intervals as to her financial position. The words Retirement Pension would make such a difference. Her position always reminds me of that famous quotation from Romeo and Juliet, "My poverty but not my will consents."

Sickness and death, despite the excellent health enjoyed by the inhabitants, could not be kept entirely out of the

village and now and again death paid an unwelcome visit.

In the march of time the aged eventually went the way of all flesh and in such a case it was a village funeral and a village in mourning. It always struck me as a peculiar feature of the village that while deaths were very few in each established family the father could always attend a funeral in the orthodox mourning attire, which included a hard hat, black tie, and black clothes, which were stored away in one of the drawers of the old fashioned chest of drawers and were as carefully laid away at the end of the day. When the Laird passed away the miners were represented and, at the funeral of Lady Henderson, there were eighteen miners present as pall-bearers, with tile hats, in relays of six, to carry the coffin from the Castle to the Chapel in answer to a last request by her ladyship, revealing the strong affection between master and servant. A Fordell funeral was a man's affair and no more appropriately solemn company of mourners ever followed a hearse.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

The care of the aged

THE position of the aged miner who, after a very strenuous life of toil, and no longer able to maintain himself and his wife, but had to depend on his family for their maintenance, was always a social problem in the village.

In most cases, each of their sons had a large family to support and the loss of their independence was always in their minds. They were dependent on their relatives for their keep and home, and even for the small luxuries, such as tobacco, making their lives a mere existence in a house in which the accommodation was limited, with nothing to live for. Their fondest dream was that in their days of retirement the aged couple could get an "end o' their ain," a one-roomed house, but that was only a forlorn hope as they had not even the means of paying the rent, not to mention their food and clothing. Continually in their thoughts was the terrible dread of having to spend the rest of their lives in the "puir-hoose," or workhouse, which would be to them the end of everything. The leaving of the village to spend their days, separated from each other, dependent on the meanest form of public charity after a life of useful toil was like a horrible nightmare to them. The "big hoose" in the "toon," with the county prison on one side and the cemetery on the other, was often pictured in their minds, but never referred to in their speech. It is to be recorded, however, that though there seemed to be no possible escape for them entering that building on the entrance to which could well be written the words "Abandon hope all ye who enter here," something always cropped up and the village never failed their veterans. Though it was little they could do, they always succeeded in some way in putting off that day they so much dreaded. Make-shift measures become permanent and a "slice off the loaf was never missed" was the main argument for each action. The old folk remained in the village and the married ones stayed together to give mutual comfort to each other when needed and when the end came to each one he or she was laid to rest in Mossgreen cemetery, "up the brae," with the loving care of their life long friends when word 'pauper' was never mentioned or even thought.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

A village family

SICKNESS, especially that of serious nature and among women and children, was a woman's affair and a change in the bustle of village life was noticeable. The children were duly impressed of the great need for silence in the vicinity of the house where the patient was in bed and they spoke only in whispers. Boisterous games were discontinued and hourly bulletins of how the patient was progressing, or otherwise, were conveyed by mouth to mouth through the rows.

Occasionally a serious illness attacked one of the children of the village and it was in such instances that the entire village were united in a common sympathy and bereavement. During the illness, and afterwards, verbal sympathy was exceeded by that of a practical kindness, and the thought that was predominant was the wish to help in some way. Miners would gladly "lie on" for the father of the invalid child, an expression to mean he would do his own day's work and then return to the pit to do a day's work for the father in order that he could sit up with the patient all the night. In such an instance there were no words of thanks asked or given. Such actions was always fully understood and appreciated and verbal thanks would upset both parties. News of the patient's condition was broadcast throughout the village from door to door. The main source of information was the village well nearest the house of the patient. At such a time the "neebors" were always needing water, usually attended to by boys or girls, but on such an occasion the women went there themselves for it was there the bulletins were sent out. Three women, with pails already full of water, would be joined by another whose first question would be, "Hoo is she this mornin', Nell?"

There was no need to state who the 'she' was, for the whole village knew it was Jeannie, the elder daughter of a miner and his wife, whose house was only a few yards away.

"Weel, we dinna richt ken except that Mrs Japp said that she wisna sae richt this mornin'. Hooever, it's aboot the doctor's time so we're jist hingin' on tae see."

Talk turns round the question of what the ailment is and Nell says she heard it was "a sittin' doon cauld efter gettin' weet when two or three of them went tae Eberdour and got drooked."

Mrs Brown added that she was aye feared o' thae sittin' doon caulds as it often led to pneumonia or pleurisy and maybe waur.

"You can never ken what a cauld will land into," said Nell.

Eventually one sees the doctor coming out of the house by the back door. He apparently had gone in by the front door. As he passed, they eagerly looked at his face to try and get some idea from his expression about how serious the situation was, but they got none.

Who was to go and find out? Eventually the oldest, Mrs Bell, having the biggest family, is deputed to inquire. After knocking gently at the door, she is admitted and then her friends wait patiently for her return.

It was some time before she reappeared and it did not take her friends long to learn that she had got bad news and when she shook her head sadly they were convinced of it.

"She's taen pneumonia," she said slowly, "and she is in a bad way."

"Ye ken, I was feared o' that, but I didna like tae say, hopin' I was wrang," said Nell.

"Weel," said Mrs Bell, "there's nae guid tae be dune talkin' aboot it. We have tae dae oor bit. She canna leave the wean an' there's things tae be got frae the chemist. I have the doctor's line here and I'll get oor Wull to gaun tae Crossgates for the medicine. He's on the back shift."

Bad news travels fast and soon all the village are inquiring in what possible way they can help. The younger member of the family is taken away to be looked after by an Auntie and more offers of bedside sitters are made than can be taken advantage of. Cooked meals find their way into the afflicted home and the mother has no worries about washing day as, according to the "neebors," "two or three bits o' things extra is neither here nor there." So the days go slowly past, the mothers always having in their mind the day when the invalid "will take the turn" for the better or worse. It takes one who has had a life-long experience of these hardened sons of the mines to really appreciate anxiety that is occupying the mind of the father, never expressed in words.

To do a day's hard work for a companion would be

a much more simple matter than the giving expression of his feelings, or to talk in affectionate terms to the invalid. He is at loss to know what to say or do at the bedside and a long walk in the country is his escape from himself. In her quiet moments, the invalid, when alone with her father, thinks of her Sunday School class and she will express the wish for the recital of some hymn, but again, the father is at loss to know what is appropriate. Of a sudden, he remembers a verse of a hymn and, hoping his memory will not fail, he starts slowly:

*If I come to Jesus
Happy I shall be,
He is gently calling
Little ones like me.*

He heaves a sigh of relief at remembering so much and at the knowledge that she has fallen asleep, drawing the bed-clothes round her neck, looks at her affectionately and softly he leaves the room. If a tear comes to his eye, he roughly brushes it away with his hard hand and he goes out into the night for that blessed solitude when he can battle with his emotions.

The day of the crisis comes and the news is broken joyfully that she has taken the turn. The whole village rejoices with thankfulness. The reaction is again a trying time for the father's emotions and, if he does not go for a solitary walk, he willingly accepts the invitation of some of his friends to join them in Mrs Hamilton's in the "College." It is an escape valve for his pent-up feelings and emotions, never condemned, but so readily understood as a thanksgiving.

CHAPTER XXXV.

Heroic women

EVER since I first took an interest in social matters, both commercial and individual, I took a special interest in the women of Fordell. As I got to know them better, through close acquaintance in their daily life, and got really to understand their attitude to their responsibilities as mothers and members of a community linked up into one big family, and what they were prepared to sacrifice for the general welfare, I found I had developed an admiration for them and all they represented.

As girls they were fortunate in their school life in that they had a schoolmaster who, besides giving them a strong foundation in the three R's and sewing, he devoted special attention to their cleanliness and manners. Clean hands and face, especially the hands, was demanded and the proper care of their clothes was duly impressed upon both boys and girls. Honesty and due respect to their elders was demanded from his pupils. It was not enough for a pupil to be clever and even brilliant. He or she had also to be clean, respectful to their elders, honest, and possess good manners.

Thus the girls left their school days behind them, determined to live up to the moral code laid down by Mr Currie, who helped them considerably by keeping in touch with them whenever he had the opportunity and very often he made the opportunity.

At twelve years of age the girls did not go into employment right away, except in a few cases, but they did housework, lessening the arduous task of the mother, who generally had to look after a large family, especially those under school age. She always found plenty to do in the house, leaving the mother to look after the cooking of meals during the day and the drying and mending of the pit clothes at night. Bringing in the messages was one of the girl's duties, while she had to keep a constant supply of water from the street "well" and coal from an outside wooden cellar.

Let us take a look at the domestic conditions that prevailed in the village in these days. As I stated previously, the houses were of two-apartments, a but and a ben, some

lucky to have wooden floors. There were two fixed-in wooden beds in each room, and old-time open fire with no oven. An average family would consist of eight persons, father and two sons, miners, two daughters over school age, and children at school. One of the oldest girls would probably be working at a pithead and the mother would have to "pit the workers oot in the mornin'." That meant preparing breakfast and making up the "piece boxes," four "shaves of bread" in the form of sandwiches, one with butter and the other jam or cheese. The butter was margarine, known generally as "pit butter." As the work at the pit started at six o'clock the four workers had to leave home shortly after five o'clock. There was a quiet time until the bairns had to get ready for the schule, which began at nine o'clock. By that time the general work had commenced. The "messages" had to be got from the "Store" and, as the children came home from school at one o'clock, the dinner had to be attended to. The most common meal was "kail," the name for vegetable soup, cooked in the "kail pat," one big enough to hold as much as supply the whole family. In it was cooked a piece of boiling beef and another pot was used for boiling the potatoes. The children at school were first supplied shortly after one o'clock and the rest was kept hot for the workers at three o'clock, but before the introduction of the eight hours day that hour was often extended until past four o'clock. By that time the workers were ready for that meal and in their pit clothes they sat round the table in the middle of the floor. During the meal the mother, helped by a daughter, prepared the warm water for the men to wash themselves. As this was many years before the idea of baths being in the house, and before the introduction of the pithead baths, the procedure of the washing was the placing of a large wooden tub in the middle of the floor. The men washed themselves right to the waist but not the back as that was considered conducive to a weakening of the back. Each one was only too glad to throw aside his pit clothes and boots as very often they were damp when he worked in a "wet place" in the pit. There was no carpet, as, after the operation, the floor had to be thoroughly washed out and scrubbed.

The men then generally took a walk when the weather was good or did some work in the garden, the source of the vegetables that were part of the mid-day meal. The mothers were then left with the care of the pit clothes and boots. The latter had to be dried and cleaned and rushed to the cobbler

if repairs were needed, but necessity often made the miners do their own repairs. The drying of the clothes often made life in the room very uncomfortable for the clothes occupied all the space in front of the fire. The nature of their work was such that the mending of the clothes was a daily performance. This was done after tea and was a tedious and painstaking job.

Such was the daily routine of the women of the village and one can easily understand that Sunday was indeed a day of thankful rest.

Yet the women did not choose this life blindly, for all their lives, especially after school days, they fully realised what was in front of them if they did not step out of line and seek another career. They knowingly accepted the life as a fulfilment of their duties to the village that meant so much to them, the home of their forbearers for many generations. They were never heard to complain, but amidst such discomforts, it is surprising how they could pick out and enjoy the few bright spots when they came along. To follow in their mother's footsteps could not be a pleasant prospect but they cheerfully did so and, in due time, married a young miner of the village and started another generation. When I think of the women of Fordell I touch my hat to them as they stand out in my memory as real heroines of industry. That refers not only to the women of my school days but to generations in front of them, when their work at home was even more arduous when they took part in the actual work of producing coal in the pit itself.

Coal was worked on the Fordell estate hundreds of years ago but only the very top seams which came to the surface or, to use a mining term, "crapped oot." The accumulation of surface water in the workings, however, prevented work to any considerable depth, and then another surface seam was tapped further north and one nearer to Crossgates. One of the Fordell Lairds went in for a very expensive scheme of an underground water-way called a "day level" and took the water to a low part on the estate, just a little above sea level. This allowed lower seams to be operated and other pits were sunk. To accommodate the increased number of miners, the proprietors then erected the village of Fordell in the latter part of the eighteenth century. In these days the men worked at the coal face, but the women were also employed. Their job was to take the coal in baskets or creels to the pit bottom and at one time actually carry the coal up the pits, fixed with stairs, long before the days of

mechanical raising of the coal, first of all by horse "gin." The Fordell women continued in this work until 1850 when an Act of Parliament put a stop to females being employed underground. Their hours of labour were long and their wages very small but were necessary to raise the family income to a living wage. In the winter time, and even the spring and autumn, the men at the "face," and the women on the low roadways, never saw the daylight until Sunday came round.

Indeed it was no surprise to find that the older men and women walked with a stoop because of the long hours employed in very low working places. Holidays were almost unknown and so stern was the necessity for the women to work as much as possible that there were occasions when a child was actually born in the pit. In my youth I actually had it first hand from some old women that children were born in the pit and were nursed by their respective mothers in a recess in the "waste" when the mothers had the opportunity to do it. As the Act of Parliament, that gave the miners their freedom from serfdom, was passed many years before this time, then women must have been employed underground more than fifty years after the miners, male and female, were given their freedom of service, celebrated every year by the Fordell Paraud. This is the story of the women of Fordell long before the village came into existence. When I first heard of the reason for the Paraud I used to wonder what they had to rejoice about, but the fact stands out prominently that their appreciation of the kindly act of colliery owners had been kept alive for a hundred years by the annual time of rejoicing in July.

The Fordeil miners were never paid any higher wages than the general rate of the county but it was the kindly consideration of the Henderson family that brought them nearer to the hearts of the villagers, such as I have referred to previously, prizes for the gardens, for the flower show, the upkeep of the brass band, and the reading room merit prizes for the school children, and small gifts to the needy, poor and the sick. It was this and the recognition of the Fordell miners by a last request from Lady Henderson to take their place at her funeral and to carry her remains to their last resting place, that made the village so complete as a community so effectively as though it was walled round about. That the miners and their families did their part in this was never in doubt. Poverty was always just round the corner and kept there by courage of the Fordell miners

and, even more so, by the Fordell women from the dark ages when they did men's work in the pits. Devotion to their families and a pride in their native village made them do wonders in housekeeping.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

Saterdag night

AMUSEMENT and entertainment was practically nil and the village with no streets, far less street lighting, put on the shutters when darkness fell. This brought about one blessing, namely, the strengthening of the home life in which the mother took the leading part in the entertainment of the younger members of the family. I can well remember Saturday night as bath night, followed by a short concert, all taking part. The "elders' oors" on Sunday was eight o'clock and that started the singing of popular hymns concluding with mothers' favourite, "My Ain Countrie," from Sanky and Moody's hymnbook, in nearly every home, and concluding by father reading a chapter of the Bible. While this was so, no one ever thought that Fordell was a religious village. In fact the "unco guid" who visited the village thought otherwise but, to my mind, if ever there was a devout religion it was practised by the women of Fordell, who religiously devoted their lives to their families under all kinds of conditions, without thought of award, other than the sense of fulfilment of a duty they took upon themselves, foreboding as the future must have been.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Story of the Fordell miners

THEN we have the men of the village, the back-bone of the community that dwelt behind those diamond panes for generation after generation.

As a lad, I was deeply interested in these men. I tried to get their confidence and occasionally I seemed to get behind what seemed to be an impenetrable cloak of silence in connection with their past and that of their forefathers. Local knowledge and gossip gave me the idea that, in most instances, and especially in the case of the least talkative, they were the existing generation of many generations beyond living memory. It was a difficult matter to get them to tell me what I wanted to know as to their life, their habits, and how long they had been associated with the mining industry. I was most successful with old Wattie and I gradually broke down his reserve in my attempts to get really inside his inner self.

"You are a queer laddie," he used to say to me, "but I've taen a likin' tae you, yet I canna understand why you pit aff your time talkin' to an auld man like me. I'm shair you wud be far better aff if you played with the ither laddies."

When he said that he had taken a liking to me I knew I was well on the way to getting what I wanted, for words of endearment, even the word "liking" were scarce, almost absent, in their vocabulary.

Then one night in the mirk, when he was resting on his "hunkers," as all miners do, after attending to his garden, I found him in a rather reminiscent mood. That day he had helped to lay an old companion to rest in Mossgreen Churchyard. Here was a chance in a thousand and I took full advantage of it. I referred to his late friend in a quiet manner, how he had so little to say, even among his cronies and in the home, of his reluctance to express himself on any matter, even his employment, and, least of all criticism, his lack of interest outside his work and a devotion to his garden. Beyond the annual Paraud he never seemed to have any form of enjoyment and recreation.

"Does that surprise you?" he said quietly.

I confessed that it did and he remarked, very pointedly, that I did not know the Fordell miners.

"Why are they so much different from any other miners I had met with?"

"Weel, luddie, that is quite a long story" he said.

I assured him I would like to hear it and with a "Weel, luddie, as there is nothin' 'pushin' the nicht, I'll tell you a thing or twa about the Fordell Watties."

"It gauns back a gey lang time tae the days afore coal howkin' and that is hunners of years back. That was the time afore folk kent what coal was. Withoot takin' in Dunfarlin', with its weavin', the only ither wark in these pairts was fermin', though there was eye somethin' daein at the herbours like Chairlestown, and sic places along the East coast.

"Aroond here it was a' fermin', and of coorse there were the big hooses and their estates that gied wark to a guid wheen. Then aboot 1300 coal was discovered by accident. In Dunfarlin, monks at Pittencrieff found 'black stanes that burned' on the sides of the burn that still runs through the Glen. Coal was, as weel, found at Keltie on the banks o' the burn at Blairadam. These were the upcast seams, the seams o' coal that come to the surface when they 'craip oot.'

"Ain o' these seams was discovered between Crossgates and Inverkeithing, maybe when plooin' or, maist likely, when a field drain was being laid. Hooever, there it was, a fermer had coal at his very door. By that time there was a big demand for the new fuel that lasted longer than wooden logs. Miners were ne'er heard tell o', so the fermer had to get his ain men, aye, and women ana, the men tae dig the coal and the women tae tak' it tae the surface in creels, like fishwives' creels, or later like tattie creels, and empty them into the ferm cairts an', bein' lang afore the days o' railways, the ferm labourer had tae dae a' the transport."

"But wha did they sell it tae?"

"Weel, there was their ferm hooses, the big hooses, and coal was needed for the dryin' o' salt at Dysart. Cairts took the coal, as weel, tae Inverkeithin' harbour, then in its prime, and farther along tae Chairlestown."

"But what has a' this tae dae wi' the Fordell miners and their weys?"

"Weel, I'll tell you. Things were cairried on in this wey until aboot a wee thing mair than fower hunder years ago. James Henderson, a King's Advocate nae doot, for services rendered, was presented wi' the lands o' Fordell by the King,

and he built Fordell Castle. The Laird later took a special interest in this coal business, especially as there was surface crap oot at Broomieside, no far tae the north o' the castle, and as each was worked oot anither was sunk further north until they came tae Drumcooper an' Vantage. The Hendersons maun hae dune mair than tak' a passin' interest, for in Fordell Castle there is still a letter o' complaint frae the Monks at Inch Colme aboot the quantity o' stanes in the coal that had been sent tae them. So you see the complaints aboot dirty coal were on the go lang ago an' it gies you an inklin' that the Fordell Laird was in the coal business at the time. There is nae doot aboot that and as weel he jist cairried on wi' the custom o' takin' the workers on the farms on Fordell and the estate workers tae work the coal pits."

"So that means that the original Fordell miners were aince ploomen, and their wives tae?"

"Exactly that laddie. That's the stock that bred the Fordell miners I telt you aboot, hoo the first miners were ploomen."

"Did you ever study the weys o' ploomen an' their wark?"

"They were 'feed' by the fermer at sae muckle a year, that was generally twa or three shillin's a week, a bothy for them no' mairried, partridge for their breakfast, a piece for the middle o' the day and kail an' tatties at nicht. For the mairried men they gat a hoose rent free and their wives did milkin'. Their sons, if ony, got wark on the farm and they were "feed" as weel. A plooman hadna muckle option in the maitter when he was asked to make the change. As a plooman he worked as long as there was licht, stabled and fed and brushed doon his pair o' horses every day, includin' Sunday. He was 'tied' tae his employer as a plooman so he micht as weel be tied as a miner wi' the inducement of shorter hours, Sunday off and bigger wages.

"Gradually the coal trade increased as additional pits were sunk by the Fordell Coal Company when aboot 1790 an underground waterway, known as a 'day level' was made to carry the water frae the workin's to Fordell Burn, near the coast. A waggon road, originally wooden rails, took the coal tae St. David's, a private harbour built by ane o' the lairds, and it wud surprise you tae ken the foreign pairts whaur Fordell coal found its wey tae. The new pumpin' arrangements and the day level had made the workin' o' lower seams possible. Mair miners were needed but new

generations o' Fordell miners solved the problem o' workers. But there was the problem o' hooses and, like the ferm workers, the miners were 'bund ower' but mair sae than the ploomen, for the ferm hand was only feed for six months or a year but the miner cudna change his gaffer but were pairt o' the colliery as muckle as a hutch so you can see that the laird had tae provide hooses for their workers.

"They first of a' built the Moss Raw, then the square an' Montieth Terrace and added tae that as time gaed on, but only Fordell men and women got the jobs. The 'Store' was built and, as you ken, the miners were paid in groceries, claes and even workin' graith. It was a minin' village in every wey. Naebody but miners and their faimilies steyed there and everythin' was looked efter by the coal owners. They even built a schule and did ither things for them like encouragin' them wi' their gairdens. Nae doot you'll be wunnerin' whey I'm tellin' you a' this.

"You said a wee while syne that the ploomen were the original Fordell miners an' I agree wi' you.

"I'm a guid sicht aulder than you, laddie, and I've had a better chance o' studyin' the ploomen. Did you ever meet sic a set o' silent men? Can you wunner at that? Tak a plooman. He's up at the break o' day, and aye, often afore it. He feeds his horse and sune efter he is followin' his horses up and doon a field weel awa' oot o' any contact with anybody. He talks tae his horses as he enters the stables. He speaks tae them on the wey tae the field and a' forenoon he tells them whan tae stop and start and whan tae turn roond. It's 'hi woa back Tam' or 'keep in the furrow Madge,' etc., when plooin' and the horses kens a' he says tae them. He has a kindly word at feedin' time, a meal that is never mislippeden. He takes his mid-day meal wi' them and sees tae them bein' fed and rubbed doon at the end o' the day afore he thinks aboot his ain denner. His horses are his freens and they never talk back tae him, and on Sunday he is never far awa' frae them. If he has ony spare time he tak's a walk maist often by himself whan, of course, he disna talk to himsel', and if he has another plooman wi' him the conversation is very limited and there is generally a silence as they walk or rest in their characteristic fashion over a gate. Like the Fordell miners wi' their Paraud they have a day or twa in the year sic like the feein' market at Dunfarlin, or July Fair, but life to them is a monotonous affair. They have a maister and they serve him well and

long service is a feature in their lives. I heard of a story that just fits in here. A maister met wan o' his ploomen at the yearly feein' market and, efter askin' how he was enjoyin' himself, the maister said 'Of coorse, Wull, you'll no be thinkin' o' gettin' feed to another fermer?' The plooman caused a surprise by saying he was thinkin' o' changin'. The fermer, whan he got ower the shock, asked him if he wanted somethin' he wisna gettin'. The reply of the plooman was, 'Weel, if I bide on I've got tae get a new brecham for Jean.' You may laugh, for efter a' it's a guid joke. Here is a man that didna think aboot gettin' better workin' conditions for himsel' and he had plenty reason for askin', and a' he thocht o' was a new bit o' harness for ain o' his horses.

"Here is what I want you tae understand. In the auld days a plooman hadna muckle to pick and choose frae when it came tae wark. As a laddie he had tae leave the schule at the first chance tae help tae keep the hoose and the only job open tae him was on the ferm. He warked awa' wi' jobs until he got tae be an orra man, that was tae look efter wan horse and did jobs whaur only wan horse was needed, wi' his mind made up tae hae a pair. The size o' a ferm aye went wi' the numbers o' pairs o' horses. The grieve aye had the first pair and the ploomen had the second pair or the third accordin' tae the size o' the ferm. When he got a pair he was a man for hissel' and his waddin' wisna long efter."

"Jist like the young miners when they got a 'place' o' their ain at the pit."

"You're rale quick in the upta', laddie. There wisna muckle difference between the weys o' daein' between the ploomen and the miners as far as the conditions o' wark maittered an' they jist cairried on in the auld wey."

"It was a peety that there wisna a Robbie Burns among them."

"I often thocht that wey tae laddie. But you maun mind that Burns wisna a fee'd plooman. He had a ferm o' his ain and anitheer thing he had a better education than an ordinary ferm hand. Nae doot mony a young plooman lad had the same thochts as Burns had but hadna the same education and cudna express them in rhyme or even ordinary prose. He had his ups and doons tae and had his ain idea aboot 'man's inhumanity tae man.' I can easy see in my mind Burns walkin' ahint a ploo, awa on his ain, makin' up his poetry as he thocht aboot hoo the workin' man was kept doon and aboot a' the hypocrisy in the warld among them better aff, aye, even in the kirk. It's maybe a funny thing tae

say but are we no gled that day that Burns wisna mair prosperous? Look what the world wud hae missed.

"Hooever, let that flee stick to the wa'. The ploomen and them that eventually got tae be Fordell miners simply took things as they cam', as it says in the poem, "their sober wishes naver learned tae stray." There is ae thing that sticks oot abune a' thing else and it is the effect on their lives by the kindness and consideration given them from the big hoose at Fordell. That kept them a' the gither as a village and community. They could never forget the fact that a laird o' Fordell gave them their freedom from serfdom, before it was compulsory, and the many kindnesses both open and secret from Fordell House, especially Lady Henderson. Every year for mair than a hunder years they marched tae Fordell Hoose to thank them for what they had done. That was their only open appreciation o' their thanks. The rest they kept to themselves but they were none the less sincere an' they kept them together as a community. 'Am I my brother's keeper?' was never asked. It was to them a religion."

Slowly rising, with a "guid nicht" we went our separate ways home.

Fordell village is no more than a memory but in all parts of the world there are those who have happy memories of a village for which a suitable coat of arms would be a pithead and a garden and the word "Service."

Personal stories and anecdotes

The Bowling Green

There were a few exceptions to the conservative life of the village. One was the fact that the village could boast of being one of the first in West Fife to have a bowling green. It was laid out by the Fordell Coal Company next to "Lovers' Loan" and the mineral railway, next to the "Gaffer's" house. It was of a smaller size than the ones laid out later in the district and gradually it fell into disuse. In the village, quoiting was more favoured as a recreation, when local duels attracted a large number.

Had own gas works

Another exception was the gas works, erected by Fordell Coal Company, at the colliery workshop, but as a light it was only made available for the workshops, the colliery office and the village reading room, when before the days of the incandescent burners the old-fashioned gas-jets were in use. In the miners' houses there were only paraffin lamps. These exceptions, which I am sure will come as a surprise to the outside world, were never taken kindly by the village.

The coal used in the manufacture of the gas was the "Parrot," a highly inflammable coal, not very plentiful and only found in narrow seams about two feet in thickness. It was very smooth and some of the miners, artistically inclined, used to make beautiful brooches and small boots which hung from their watch chains. An ordinary penknife was the tool used and the finished article, even to the lace of the boot, was uniquely artistic.

Harry Lauder

How many people are aware that Sir Harry Lauder had a connection with Fordell? John Smart was my informant when I paid him a visit one night to talk over old times and he produced a photograph to prove his words. The picture shown is the one he gave me and one can easily see it is Harry Lauder, and the lady is his wife. The association with Fordell is the fact that Mrs Lauder was the daughter of Mr Valentine, the "gaffer" for many years in Fordell Colliery, and Harry Lauder thus married a young lady well

known in the village as a girl. John told me he got the picture from an Aberdour photographer many years ago, so probably it was taken when the couple were on a visit to Aberdour while they were residing in Portobello.

Oldest native

The question of who was the oldest native of Fordell has always been the subject of much heated argument but very few know that the oldest native was a frog, or known locally as a "puddock," which was alive after an existence of thousands of years. My father, while employed in the Lady Ann Pit, broke up a large piece of ordinary coal when, to his surprise, a frog jumped out. He caught it and found that it had come from the coal because there was a vacancy the exact shape and size as the frog. He brought it to our home in Coles Terrace. At that time I was a very small boy and I cannot recall exactly what happened to the frog but I have the strong impression that Mr Morton sent the find to a museum. The frog, of a dark brown colour, was very probably a toad. It only lived for a few hours after it arrived home.

"Smairt" Family

I mentioned the Smart family, pronounced "Smairt" in the village. How many generations of the family resided and were employed at Fordell is not known. It is known, however, that John Bennet Smart was a miner in Fordell and resided there for a long number of years. His son of the same name was born there and remained all his life there. He went to work in the pits there when nine years of age and retired after an accident in 1879, a continued service of seventy years. In his family there was another John Smart who completed fifty years in the Fordell Pit while resident in Fordell village. He then retired, a victim of rheumatism, and came to reside at Cowdenbeath recently, where he celebrated his golden wedding. On that occasion he paid a visit to his beloved Fordell only to see it in the process of demolition. When a boy he took a great interest in Fordell Band and at last got a wish fulfilled when he became the drummer, following in the steps of his tutor, Robbie Hardie. At that time the Fordell Band was at the height of its popularity and were always in request. He told me recently of how they used to accompany the Dunfermline factory girls' annual outing. He recalled one such outing when the band went into Dunfermline with the factory train at five o'clock

in the morning, a train that started at Lochgelly taking the girls to the "toon," as Dunfermline was best known by. That morning they did not go to work but they assembled at the Erskine Beveridge factory, 700 in all, and following the band walked to the Upper Station, a walk over a mile, where they went by special train to Dunkeld. On another occasion this party went to Linlithgow where they caused a great stir by dancing on the streets to the music of the band, something new in the life of the sedate town, the popular penny reel being danced eighteen times. This was to the delight of the inhabitants and especially the publicans who, he added, treated the members of the band handsomely.

John, however, committed an unpardonable village offence for he married a "stranger." She was Jenny Arnott, one of the eldest of the family of John Arnott, who went to Fordell from Crossgates, but she was then only an infant of one year. That family was never accepted as natives though, as can be seen from the picture of the Arnott family, twelve in all with two absent, they must have been resident in Fordell a very long time. I give you this picture for another reason and that is to give a general idea of the large families at that time. I leave you with the problem to solve of how such a family resided in a two-roomed house. This picture was taken about fifty years ago.

Fordell Band

Many of the stories of the village are associated with Fordell Band and here is one that goes back to the days of the toll gates. Returning one night from an engagement they came to Auchtermuchty where a toll was collected after midnight. It was kept by an old man and woman who demanded toll as it was past twelve. An argument took place outside and a member of the band, Deil Broon, took advantage of the argument to slip into the house and turn a grandfather's clock back an hour. After he returned unnoticed he waited a short time and then said that for the right time they would go by the time showing on their own clock in the house, and added, "it was sharely only fair." The old man and woman agreed to this at once and it was only the next morning they realised they had been cheated.

On another occasion they were walking home from a place nearer home when they asked for, and were given, a lift in a farmer's corn cart. They soon fell asleep but so did the driver and the unguided horse left the main road and

went into a grass field. The horse went round and round the field and two hours later, when the driver woke up, it was to find that they had only travelled a short distance of their journey home.

A very prominent Fordell family was the Gibb family of whom Peter was the big drummer for a long number of years. After an engagement many miles from home Peter became the owner of two hens which he killed and placed inside the big drum after removing one of the skins, which he cleverly replaced. A policeman entered upon the scene and a search was made for the hens but despite remarks by Peter that the policeman was getting "hot and cold" while near the drum and going away from it, they were never found and the hens found their way to an invalid in the village on their return home.

The Beveridge twins, Rob and Will, were both members of the Fordell Brass Band and on one occasion, when Dundee was selected for the Fife Miners' Gala, they were in the band that led the Fordell contingent. Because of the early rise, that reason is as good as any, they both arrived at Dundee much in need of a shave, and Rob took the first chance to visit a barber who commented on the "heavy growth" of his beard. Rob replied that he had shaved that morning, which the barber said was impossible, but Rob assured him that was so and added that he would be as bad in a few hours' time. This the barber discredited and when Rob maintained he was shaved that morning the barber challenged him on the point and if he came back any time that day he would shave him free and give him half-a-crown. Here was a grand chance to get half-a-crown and get his twin brother Will a free shave, so a few hours later Will went into the shop and said, "Here I am for that shave and the 'hauf croon'." The trick came off and the twins boasted of how they had "bate" the Dundee barber for a long time afterwards.

Two cronies of the village, no names this time, both members of the band, used to have great arguments about their ability to play when they met in Mrs Hamilton's and their arguments used to be carried on as well about their work. They never got together in a social capacity but they would argue about something or other to the great amusement of the others in their company. But one died and was buried in Mossgreen Churchyard, quite near but higher up than the main road, in front of the church. Some time after-

wards his cronie was proceeding home carrying "one over the eight" when he staggered against the cemetery wall and fell. Looking up he said, "Tak' in your big feet Will and no' hae folk fa'in' owre them."

Not far away was the well-known Coaledge public house. The local name for it was "College" and this led to an amusing dialogue one night when a well-known Fordell man, who was the Paraud Deacon for many years, met an old friend inside. The friend, whom he had not seen for some time, said that he had been disappointed with his son whom he had sent to college for several years and he had not passed. Whereupon the Deacon said, "Man Jimmy, dinna let that worry you owre muckle. I've gaen tae the College for fifty years and I hivna passed it aince."

A story is told of how a well-known Fordell man, after leaving the "College" for his home in the Square, forgot to turn in to that row of miners' houses and went straight on. Eventually he slipped down a small embankment and finished up with his feet in a small burn and he fell asleep. A man passing by wakened him but, thinking he was in bed, said drowsily, "Mither, pit the blankets owre ma feet" and looking towards a waning moon added "and pit that candle oot."

The drummer who lost his band

There are two versions of this story and you can take your choice of the right one.

Fordell Band were engaged for "Dirthill" Flower Show and duly appeared in the village after their walk from Fordell. The drummer, Peter Gibb, at the rear of the band, was under the impression that they were to march to James Street and then on their return to go down the Aberdour Road to the school where the Flower Show was held. But the rest of the band did otherwise and turned down towards the school and did not go up the hill to James Street. Peter, behind the big drum, did not see this and he went proudly on all on his own until he was over the hill. It was then he realised this and, looking at the crowd, now laughing, came out with the now famous expression, "Have you seen a band onywey."

The other version is that it was Robbie Hardie who was the drummer and the incident took place on a Friday night when the band went up the College Brae instead of going along Coles Terrace as was their usual practice. Those who

favour the latter version argue that it must have been Hardie as he was a smaller man, but George Gibb, nephew of Peter Gibb, says there is no doubt but that it was his Uncle Peter.

Umbrella feat

Bob tells of another Gibb story which I have heard from another two sources. The three brothers Peter, Geordie and Frank were standing at the College one "lag" Saturday forenoon, on a very warm day in July, with a strong "drooth" (thirst) after the night before but without the wherewithal to quench it. I am convinced that this applied more to Peter and Geordie than to Frank who only joined in the "ploy." They were at a loss to know how to get the drink of beer they so much wanted and at last Peter conceived a plan which he put into action. He went into a house there and came out with a big umbrella. They sat down to await the arrival of the "beer cairt" from Dunfermline, on its way to Dirthill. This was a horse and a lorry that carried a load of big bottles of beer, known as "Prestonpans," which the driver sold to customers on his round. When the "beer cairt" approached Peter opened the big umbrella and proceeded to walk in front of the "cairt." The sight of a man carrying a big umbrella on such a warm day, with the sun beating down, attracted the attention of the driver so much that he made up his mind that the man was "aff his heid." He kept watching Peter so closely that he did not notice Geordie and Frank following up and hiding behind the "cairt" taking as many bottles of beer and "planking" them on the roadside to be reclaimed later.

The battle of Fordell

Right in front of the old schoolhouse is a field which I often heard referred to as "The Battlefield" and eventually I made inquiries of the oldest natives as to the reason of the name. It was then I was told that the village was "up sides wi' Inverkeithing and has it's battle tac." The story, handed down during the generations, is that Cromwell fought a battle there—against whom was never stated. Rab Penman told me it was referred to in a historical book he got in "Dunfarlin" and he took it to Lammas Fair at Inverkeithing to show the folk there that they "cood bounce aboot a battle an' a'" and didn't remember bringing it back home that night. Whiles, he said, there was a talk to erect a stone in the field but "it aye fell throo."

Touching scenes

Many stories are told about the strong devotion Fordell Watties had for their native village and how many had sacrificed opportunities to improve their own position and, more important, the opportunities to their families for advancement by leaving their native village to be employed in places where there were more than the one industry. They fully realised that not only would they get better social conditions for themselves but that their family could select other callings and escape from the foreboding prospect of a life associated only with the mining industry and how they could get ambitions realised but the village ties and their camaraderie were too strong to permit of them giving such a suggestion more than a passing thought. Some were tempted to leave when a strong temptation of bigger wages came along but of that number a very few left the village for good. Most of them returned to the village and of them it was stated that they were only too glad to return. They simply could not stay away and were so glad to come back that they swore they would never go away again and that they were so pleased to come back to the family circle that they felt they "could kiss the rails" that ran throughout the village.

I put this to an old native, Jimmy Muir, when I met him at Cowdenbeath and he laughed heartily at the thought of miners kissing the rails but shortly afterwards admitted "there's an awfu' lot in what you say."

There were very strong indications of the great love the older members of the families had for the village when the village was condemned. Many simply refused to leave and drastic action had to be taken by taking the roofs off the houses. There were many touching scenes as the miners and their wives followed their furniture as it was carted away to houses in Crossgates and Halbeath. One old lady simply refused to leave. She was the very last in the village and resided in the only house left with a roof. However, she had to go and as the roof was taken from the house her furniture was being taken to a furniture van. The last scene of all was when she was escorted quietly from her home and the home of her forbears for many generations with tears running down her face. When the "College Brae" was reached the van was stopped and she was given her last look of her beloved Fordell.

This picture I will carry in my memory as long as I live.

Today the village is derelict but it is so easy to depict the village as it was in my school days and relive the many scenes in this unique Scottish village. Only a few yards away is Mossgreen Churchyard and, as the darkness deepens, it does not take a strong imagination to see the spirits of well-known figures in the life of the village having a last look down on the Fordell they loved so much.